Metaphysics or Ontology?

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Metaphysics or Ontology?

By

Piotr Jaroszyński

Translated from the Polish by

Hugh McDonald

BRILL

RODOPI

To the memory of Hugh McDonald, friend and translator (1957–2015)

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Contents

PART 3
Metaphysics or Ontology: Disputed Questions

Foreword

Along with the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, the modern period witnessed many changes in the discipline of philosophy. One significant change was the transformation of metaphysics into ontology. In this book, Piotr Jaroszynski has produced a very impressive account of how this transformation took place and how various philosophical questions, positions taken, and cultural factors led, directly or indirectly, to the rise of ontology.

It is an important work for at least two reasons. First, it improves our understanding of the history of philosophy. Well-researched and comprehensive, it covers all the major thinkers and camps with respect to metaphysics and ontology. Jaroszynski displays a great command of primary sources and the pertinent secondary literature. Second, it deepens our philosophical understanding of metaphysics, while treating in detail important differences between metaphysics and ontology. In this way it will be useful to a wide range of philosophers. Realist philosophers, especially those in the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, will be particularly interested in it because Jaroszynski defends a realist understanding of metaphysics, arguing that the proper object of metaphysics is being.

After a discussion of the rise of philosophy among the ancient Greeks, the rise of metaphysics with Aristotle, and the influence that different sets of commentators have had on interpreting Aristotle, Jaroszynski traces the most important stages in the historical transformation of metaphysics into ontology. Here he analyzes the philosophical connections among Descartes, the British empiricists, the early German founders of ontology (from Lorhard to Clauberg), Wolff, Kant, Hegel, Bolzano, Frege, Meinong, Husserl, Ingarden, Heidegger, process philosophers, postmodernists, and others. What emerges from his analysis is that the nominalism prevalent in thinkers toward the end of the Middle Ages, such as Duns Scotus, helped prepare the shift from metaphysics to ontology.

Scotus was influential indirectly, through the work of Francisco Suárez. The early German founders of ontology relied upon Suárez to understand Scholastic metaphysics in order, as Protestants, to argue against Catholic theology and philosophy. The precursor to ontology was contained in Suárez's understanding of being, which he largely adopted from Scotus. In contrast to Scotus, Thomas had argued that existence was primary in the order of being. There is a real distinction in creatures between existence and essence because existence is related to essence as actuality to potentiality. Additionally, Thomas maintained that existence could not be known through a concept, but through the act of judgment. Scotus, however, rejected the real distinction between

existence and essence and he rejected existence as primary. Instead, existence was understood as a modality of essence, which was understood conceptually. Essence became primary and the object of metaphysics began to shift from being to the concept of being.

For Scotus, non-contradiction set the boundary for the concept of being. Anything that was capable of existence, even if it did not currently exist, was included in the concept of being. As a result, metaphysics became the study of possibility (possible being) and not the study of reality (actually existing being). In his highly influential *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (Metaphysical Disputations), Suárez sided with Scotus against Thomas on this issue. In this way Scotus and Suárez laid the foundation upon which later thinkers would transform metaphysics into ontology.

Jaroszynski treats in depth the evolution of the object of metaphysics from being to the concept of being to, finally, the object (i.e., object of thought). Whereas possible being must be non-contradictory, an object of thought includes anything a human being can think or speak of, including contradictions and nothingness. Existence is irrelevant to objects of thought. However, when either the concept of being or object of thought replaces existence as the object of metaphysics it becomes something other than metaphysics—it becomes ontology, or something beyond ontology.

Beyond names, what is at stake are the most fundamental and important questions human beings can ask. These include questions about God, truth, meaning, morality, human nature and happiness, and how to best order human society. Classical metaphysics, as the study of existing reality, can treat these questions. Ontology, however, cannot. This is because ontology, as Jaroszynski notes, only investigates concepts and possibility. Other sciences cannot replace the need for metaphysics because they merely investigate a selected aspect of reality. Only classical metaphysics investigates reality precisely as reality.

Metaphysics or Ontology? is the culmination of many years of study and research. It masterfully treats not only the history of the controversy, but also many important metaphysical questions that have been raised over the centuries. These include questions such as (1) How should we understand being—as real or possible? (2) How should we understand existence—as actuality or as a mode of essence? and (3) Which has priority, essence or existence? This is a book that will reward the reader with new insights each time it is read; it deserves the special attention of scholars and philosophers for decades to come.

Robert Anthony Delfino
St. John's University, New York

Preface

I started the research for this book to find answers for myself about why, so often in the philosophical literature, one finds identification of metaphysics with ontology as opposed to a clear distinction between the two. Being educated in classical metaphysics (Catholic University of Lublin, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies), I felt that something was wrong with this, but I was not sure what. To find clarity, I decided to check the origins of the terms 'metaphysics' and 'ontology.' The results of my research convinced me that metaphysics and ontology have different objects, because they apply different methods to know their object. Moreover, since both disciplines are fundamental for any system of philosophy and for any philosophical discipline, I realized that I needed to write a serious monograph based upon basic sources in their original languages.

This volume was first published in Polish as *Metafizyka czy ontologia?* (2011). The current English translation, done by Hugh McDonald, has been only slightly modified in form to comply with publisher house style. As well, English translations for all passages in foreign languages has been offered, and bibliographic references have been updated and expanded in some cases.

The structure of the book is simple. In the first part, I analyze the beginnings and main currents of metaphysics, in the second, I explore the beginnings and the main currents of ontology, and in the third part, I elucidate the most salient differences between metaphysics and ontology regarding such crucial topics as understanding of being, reality, existence, essence, object, subject, system, and analogy. I found that the differences seem to be substantial, which is why I conclude that we should try to avoid identification of metaphysics with ontology.

The book does not have to be read chapter after chapter, since there are problems which can be grasped separately, what makes it very useful for didactic purposes.

There are few people to whom I would like to express my special thanks: first and foremost, I offer my gratitude to my beloved Parents, Janina and Czesław, and to my wife Hanna and daughter Agata. I also extend thanks to Andrzej Maryniarczyk for assistance with the Polish edition of this book; to the late Hugh McDonald, who expertly translated the Polish edition into English; to Peter Redpath and Robert Delfino, Brill Editors who have been extremely helpful in getting the English translation published; to Edward Macierowski and to Curtis Hancock, who encouraged me intellectually; to my cousin Krzysztof Król and to Halina Szarkowski for their material support; to Elizabeth D. Boepple for her outstanding patience and effectiveness in checking and editing the English translation.

Introduction

Metaphysics or ontology? Answering this question is crucial for an understanding of Western philosophy. The question offers an occasion to examine how the subject of metaphysics has been judged and developed within different currents of philosophy.

Why does the question elicit diverse answers? Why have some schools of thought judged that the very name of metaphysics is inadequate? Metaphysics generates a host of controversies. Besides determining just what the object of metaphysics is, the philosopher must confront other key questions: (1) What about the origin and significance of the name 'metaphysics'? (2) What does it mean to say that metaphysics studies being qua being? (3) How does the intellect understand an object qua object? (4) How does the intellect grasp being as a notion? While philosophers have divergent answers to these questions, the history of philosophy reveals that they regard them as important. Their attention to these questions shows that the history of philosophy manifests certain stages toward distinguishing metaphysics from ontology.

Expressis verbis, the problem of a difference between metaphysics and ontology did not exist either in ancient times or in the Middle Ages. It could not exist up to the first half of the first century BCE, because neither term had entered any language by that time. While the name 'metaphysics' appeared in the first century BCE, the term 'ontology' was not coined until the seventeenth century CE. Curiously, once the names became established in philosophical discourse, they were, as a rule, used interchangeably or complementarily, rather than in opposition. Only in the twentieth century were debates about philosophy held with reference to those terms as expressing different approaches to the object of philosophy, or even with appreciating ontology as the most important area of philosophy, and penalizing metaphysics by modifying, deconstructing, or erasing it from history.

Now, the controversy has virtually passed from the scene, for metaphysics has been dismissed, by various philosophical approaches, as obsolete. When considered at all, it is to subject it to negative criticism. Is it not strange that metaphysics, once anointed as 'the Queen of the Sciences,' has now fallen so far out of favor that she rarely appears in curricula at the vast majority of universities, including Catholic universities and seminaries? This neglect exists despite the fact that Pope John Paul II, in his famous encyclical *Fides et ratio*, strongly emphasized the importance of metaphysics for the Christian culture and argued that theology would be impoverished, if not impossible, without

it. Certainly, his intention was not to promote metaphysics institutionally. Instead, his aim was to support theology, which depends on philosophy in order to interpret Revelation in accordance with truth. What profit can come from philosophy if it were cut off from reality? Theologians depend on philosophy, regardless whether they realize it. How can the theologian assess the value of philosophy, which he uses unconsciously?

Sometimes, specifying these disciplines and problems becomes entangled in cultural circumstances. University officials and government bureaucrats have been known to adjudicate these subjects in the name of prevailing intellectual fashions. If there is a consensus that ontology should replace metaphysics, then metaphysics may be marginalized, or even eliminated, by administrative fiat. The status of philosophy at a university can be decided by internal faculty and staff, or, far too often, it is decided by the interference of external factors. This influence (or meddling) can actually alter the nature of philosophical curricula. In their intention to standardize curricula, ministers of education often alter language in such a way as to alter and reconstitute the subject matter of philosophical education itself. A case in point is administrators who ignore the distinction between metaphysics and ontology. Worse, they sometimes, by administrative decree, simply replace 'metaphysics' with 'ontology,' or consider the terms to be equivalent. While modern and contemporary debates about metaphysics have been rich in analysis and linguistic distinctions, it has not engaged the foundational questions of metaphysics. Getting to the heart of the matter requires keen historical investigation. An intensive and comprehensive awareness of the scope of philosophical knowledge, by authors ranging from ancient and medieval transmitters to mainstream modern thinkers, is necessary for an assessment of the possibility, nature, and importance of metaphysics. Of course, there is reluctance to take up this research about the past, especially the Middle Ages. That aversion, which is rooted in the Reformation that launched such slogans as 'Middle Ages—the Dark Ages,' and 'medieval philosophy—the handmaiden of theology,' was adopted by new dominant trends, which were not so much religious as ideological by nature. No wonder then that ideologies of the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Revolution of 1968 in France (all variations of socialism), while discrediting Christianity, also discredited philosophy in its classical sense in order to abolish rational and realistic philosophy, and promote naked postmodernism.

Through the mediation of whom then did the luminaries of modern and contemporary philosophy shape their image of ancient and medieval philosophy? It turns out that neither Descartes, nor Kant, nor Hegel, nor Husserl, nor Heidegger successfully broke with the past in order to start over. Truth be

known, each of these philosophers leaned on a master, who bridged the past for his students. This he did by giving his unique vision of Greek and medieval philosophy. For modern philosophy, Francisco Suárez, whose *Disputationes metaphysicae* became a basic manual for classical secondary schools and universities, both Catholic and Protestant, engineered this bridge. It is through Suárez that modern philosophers learned about the most important philosophers of the past.

Another author, whose impact was narrower than that of Suárez, but who was still significant, was Christian Wolff. He manufactured a crystalline image of Scholastic philosophy that exposed it to criticism and rejection. As is well known, Immanuel Kant relished that criticism and rejection. While Wolff was not as popular as Suárez, Kant managed to promulgate Wolff's philosophy as significant. Along with inflating the reputation of Wolff, Kant also transmitted Wolff's distorted image of Scholasticism.

Finally, among the most significant figures of the twentieth century was Franz Brentano, whose influence is difficult to exaggerate. As a bridge builder, he brought back some ideas from ancient and medieval philosophy, which inspired a development of new philosophical trends and systems, especially in phenomenology.

What did Suárez, Wolff, and Brentano have in common? They shared a similar perspective on Scholasticism, as they looked through the prism of the philosophy of Duns Scotus. Through Suárez, Wolff, and Bentano, Scotism widely influenced contemporary philosophy; although its representatives rarely seem to have been aware of it, for they did not know that what is called 'Scholasticism' is just a variation of Scotism, even when such is matched with Thomism. The situation then is unusual. Although the modern and contemporary philosophers declaratively wanted to distance themselves from the past, especially from Scholasticism, they still remained stuck in it, or rather, in one of its currents, the current generated by Scotus.

Metaphysics or ontology then? Answers to this question emerge from the controversies that exist not on the level of names, but meanings, and which involve such disputes as that between Aristotle and Plato in antiquity, between Thomas and Scotus in the Middle Ages, and in modern times, between idealism and realism, where realism is represented by Étienne Gilson on behalf of the history of philosophy, and by the Lublin Philosophy School in Poland for example, which was founded by Mieczyslaw Albert Krąpiec.

What future controversies surround metaphysics and ontology? The answer depends on whether parties to the dispute will be open to knowledge about ancient and medieval philosophy on strictly theoretical, and not merely

practical, technical, or theological grounds. There is a burning need to advance knowledge not in terms of novelty or originality, but in terms of assessing the progression or regression of earlier and later philosophers. In other words, how does a philosopher relate to its predecessors?

The historiography of philosophy in Hegel's thought attempts to answer this question. By Hegel's account, the past is automatically assimilated into and overcome by the present. Sometimes, this gives Hegel license to report or interpret the past in unacceptable ways. For instance, consider his synopsis of the career of Francis Bacon. As a teen, Bacon supposedly studied philosophy for two years with a one-year break in between due to ill health. And yet, Hegel claimed that, even by this time, Bacon self-consciously envisioned undermining the philosophy of Aristotle. Such an account belongs to the realm of philosophical myths, which allows for creating modernist geniuses unencumbered by the idols of the past.

There is no automatism in the development of philosophy—it is possible for philosophy to fade into its complete necrosis. Take Postmodernism as a case in point: does this represent the death of philosophy? No, because it is no philosophy at all! It is merely an ideology, artificially propagated in the media and universities under the aegis of political correctness. This ideology is not capable of engaging in dialogue, because it rejects any possibility of the rational cognition of reality, which is the common point of reference for those who seek the truth. Missing reality makes every dialogue become a multiplexed monologue that loses any cognitive function.

So, how is classical philosophy to be defended? In the usual way, which has been followed for centuries; that is, by studying, discussing, writing, and delivering lectures. This is the way of practicing philosophy in its classical sense. The Hegelian spirit of time becomes ineffective, if we, consciously and courageously recognizing the role of philosophy in Western civilization, do not surrender to the pressure of fashion or administrative regulation. This philosophy will live if only one philosopher makes an effort to practice metaphysics.

And this is no small thing. The dispute over the place of metaphysics in the philosophical culture of the West has a special significance, because its results are responsible for shaping the vision of reality, which includes what belongs to the transcendent, what is called 'God' by religion, and what pertains to the immanent, especially to society, where humankind can develop and share common cultural principals and goals with others. Ultimately, it is the place of metaphysics to identify such principles and objective, and to explain how they are grounded in reality. Nothing but classical metaphysics can explore reality qua reality. No other disciplines can do the same, neither modern science, which can examine reality only under a chosen aspect, nor ontology, which

investigates concepts and mere possibilities. The work of metaphysics can be done only by metaphysics, and on that account, it is an irreplaceable treasure in Western civilization.

The aim of this book is not to announce the winner in the rivalry between metaphysics and ontology. The idea is to show the philosophical context in which the dispute has been conducted. The author can only hope that this study will shed light on nagging contentious points in the ongoing debate about metaphysics. Moreover, he hopes that his narration and assessment will invite other interested parties to take up their own detailed examination of the issues. If that happens, it will be a boon to the culture, because the dispute about metaphysics and ontology is bound to continue.

So! With those lofty goals in mind, where does this work begin?

Since we cannot analyze the controversy, much less resolve it, at merely the level of the terms themselves, we must instead examine the context of the respective philosophical systems and the history of how key problems were approached in order to resolve our controversy. These problems include how the objects of philosophy, metaphysics, and ontology have been defined. Only after that can we detect various nuances and see clearly the differences between metaphysics and ontology. Although the problem (metaphysics or ontology?) seems to be very much a matter for specialists, especially today when philosophy has been pushed to the margins of culture and science, it is very important to those engaged in philosophical controversy. What could be more important for philosophy than defining of the object of philosophy; that is, how we may explain or criticize the thing with which philosophy is concerned? No matter what currents have appeared throughout the history of philosophy, the key matter is the object of cognition, and in connection with this, the questions of where that object comes from, and what methods can be used to determine or define it.

By posing our topic as the opposition of alternatives—either metaphysics or ontology—we emphasize clearly the differences between metaphysics and ontology in relation to their object and their approach to the most fundamental philosophical controversies. It is not important that some authors fail to recognize the differences between metaphysics and ontology, or, that they try to minimize them. The question is whether the object that philosophy explains is 'reality' (called 'being' in technical language) or whether it is something else that is defined in different ways, such as the concept of being, possible being, or object of thought (i.e., anything which can be thought of, including contradictions and nothingness). The most essential controversy concerning philosophy has been centered around this point, regardless of what sort of arguments have been used to justify the views.

We shall show that there are two main differences between metaphysics and ontology: (1) Metaphysics is about being qua being (*on he on*), while ontology is about the concept of being. (2) Metaphysics is about real being, ontology about possible being. This means that from the perspective of ontology, we are unable to reach a real being as real.

The question whether we should pursue being through metaphysics or ontology might be taken in a banal sense, in which case it would be philosophically unimportant. I submit, however, that the distinctions described above will emerge in the course of our study and that these distinctions make for very serious philosophical consequences. Others may take a more banal reading of the issue. Let us begin by exploring these alternatives.

In this work, we will first take a look at the birth of philosophy, and therein, the birth of metaphysics. Although the main positions to be considered will be presented as being in opposition with one another, nevertheless, all of the respective positions can be deemed as belonging to the realm of metaphysics. After this, we will then consider how ontology arose, and in what sort of philosophical context it arose—a philosophical context that was earlier called metaphysics. The birth of ontology, its phases of development, and its final decline, are questions that call for a historical approach in addition to an analytical approach.

Since the beginning of modernity, the history of philosophy has not run in a straight line, as some textbooks on the history of philosophy would have us believe. What appears at a later time is not always an advance over what existed earlier. Sometimes, what is new hearkens back to some past current that is taken as representing an entire epoch. So it was with Scotism, which in modern times has been simply identified with scholasticism, yet Scotism, while a special form of scholasticism, is not identical to scholasticism. The newborn ontology is a continuation mostly of Scotus's work.

The last part of this book concerns key problems or philosophical controversies considered from the perspective of ontology and metaphysics, such as how being is understood, the conception of essence, the status of existence, and the problem of analogy in philosophy. Metaphysical and ontological points of view are in opposition and used to clash. All the more, the author of this work thinks that the analyses here will allow the reader to see that the gap between ontology and metaphysics cannot be bridged. If philosophy is to be reborn and regain its rightful place in Western culture and science, it will only be through a return to metaphysics, whose object is that from which philosophical thought was born, namely reality. Without philosophy, Western culture loses its identity.

The defense of metaphysics is the defense of knowledge that is rational and which tries to take in reality as a whole, not only to learn from some perspective about this or that aspect of things in the particular sciences. It also helps in making decisions that will help us stand at a proper distance from what we come into contact with. Ontology does not and cannot perform that role. It is thus all the more necessary to turn to metaphysics, to save even a bit of the wisdom without which we cannot live in a truly human way.

PART 1

On the Origin of Metaphysics

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How philosophy arose in the Greek world continues to intrigue us. Although we may speak of Chinese or Indian philosophy as being older than Greek philosophy, these were ex post facto descriptions that were made after Greek philosophy had already come into existence. We may even doubt whether these works really were forms of philosophy. A specialist in Eastern philosophy writes:

> The word '*zhéxué*' (doctrine of the sages) as philosophy did not appear in China until the twentieth century and was borrowed from the Japanese expression '*tetsugaku*' (which uses the same Chinese characters); the latter expression was not coined until about 1876 by Nishi Amane. Around the same time, the Korean language (*cheolhak*) and the Vietnamese language (*triet hoc*) borrowed the expression from Chinese or Japanese. Before that there was no single word to describe this domain, but at least two words were used: '*jia*'—a school of thought, family; and '*xue*'—a doctrine, study.[1]

Seemingly then, there was no term to match the Greek word for philosophy (φιλοσοφία; *philosophía*) until the second half of the nineteenth century! A school of thought, a doctrine or teaching, or a study is not necessarily a philosophy. Is what today we call Chinese, Korean, or Japanese philosophy really philosophy? Perhaps it is a case of metonymy, which is overly interpretative. For this reason—to elucidate the basic meaning of philosophy—we should turn to the source and context in which philosophy appeared; namely, Greek philosophy.

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1   Maciej Zięba, "Chińska filozofia" [Chinese Philosophy]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii* [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy] (Lublin: Polskie Tow. Tomasza z Akwinu, 2001), 5: 115.

From *Sophía* to *Philosophía*

The Greek word philosophy (φιλοσοφία) is composed of the two elements: philo- is derived from the Greek word for friend (φίλο), while -sophy comes from the Greek word for wisdom (*sophía*; σοφία). According to the generally accepted interpretation, with the first expression meaning love and the second meaning wisdom, philosophy, then, means the love of wisdom. The Italian historian Giovanni Reale recalls this exposition of the word and writes:

> Let us say at once that according to tradition Pythagoras was the author of the word *philosophy*. Although this is not historically certain, it is probable. It is completely certain that the word was coined by a religious mind who supposed that the certain and complete possession of wisdom (*sophía*) is possible only for the gods, and at the same time he emphasized that for man the only things possible were the pursuit of wisdom, a constant approach to it, a never completely requited love for it, and this is the source of the word *philo- sophía*.[1]

Philosophy is the love of wisdom, not wisdom itself, because only the gods possess wisdom. Love of wisdom means drawing closer to wisdom itself. This exposition is the most widely accepted interpretation of the word philosophy.[2]

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1 Giovanni Reale, *Historia filozofii starożytnej* [A History of Ancient Philosophy], trans. Edward Iwo Zieliński (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2000), 1:53.

2 We find confirmation of this in Diogenes Laertius, who writes, "But the first to use the term (φιλοσοφία), and to call himself a philosopher (φιλόσοφον) or lover of wisdom, was Pythagoras; for, said he, no man is wise, but God alone. Heraclides of Pontus, in his *De mortua*, makes him say this at Sicyon in conversation with Leon, who was the prince of that city or of Phlius. All too quickly, the study was called wisdom (σοφία) and its professor a sage (σοφός), to denote his attainment of mental perfection; while the student who took it up was a philosopher (φιλόσοφος) or lover of wisdom." *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 2 vols., trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1980), 1:13 (Prolog. 12). Cicero has a similar explanation (Cic., *Tusc.* 5.3 7–9). John Burnet also supports this idea. He thinks that Plato upheld the Pythagorean concept of philosophy in the *Phaedo*, where philosophy appears not as a body of knowledge that allows one to satisfy his curiosity, but as a way of purifying the soul from the body (similar to religion) in order to free the soul from the need for repeated reincarnation in metempsychosis; cf. *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), Chap. 2.

Still, we may have reservations about the interpretation of the word 'philosophy,' as meaning 'love of wisdom' if it is only a substitute for wisdom possessed by the gods.

It is not surprising that we do not find the word 'philosophy' coined by Pythagoras in any of his written works, since, according to legend, Pythagoras only taught by word of mouth. It is surprising that we do not find the word among the neo-Pythagoreans or the other pre-Socratics.

In extant Greek texts, the word 'philosophy' appeared relatively later, namely in the works of the historians Herodotus and Thucydides. Herodotus (485–425 BCE), in *The Histories* (circa 440 BCE), ascribes to Cröesus the opinion that philosophy is the reason why Solon traveled for such a long time. In this context, philosophy is the love of knowledge in a very broad sense, which Solon acquired as he visited many lands. Philosophy in this sense is not identified with science or knowledge concerned with a particular kind of object.[3]

Likewise, in the *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (circa 431 BCE), Thucydides (460–404/393 BCE), has Pericles characterize Greek culture as different from the culture of Asia in the following words:

> Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement (φιλοκαλούμεν) without extravagance and knowledge (φιλοσοφούμεν), without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it.[4]

We see how the word 'philosophy' appears among many other words that typify the Greek spirit, but which do not possess any exceptional meaning that would elevate them to higher tones or which would designate philosophy as a science, or at least as this 'love of wisdom.' It is a love of knowledge, alongside a love of beauty and, generally, of the passions, which the Athenians were proud to possess. The context of the Pericles speech does not indicate that he was speaking of some exceptional discipline, a science, or the highest of the sciences.

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3 Herodotus writes, "After Solon had seen everything and had thought about it, Croesus found the opportunity to say, "My Athenian guest, we have heard a lot about you because of your wisdom (σοφίης) and of your wanderings, how as one who loves learning (ὡς φιλοσοφέων) you have traveled much of the world for the sake of seeing it, so now I desire to ask you who is the most fortunate man you have seen." *Herodotus in Four Volumes*, trans. A.D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920–1925), 1:30.

4 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. R. Crawley (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1910), 2.39.4–2.40.1.

The next word, 'philía' (φιλία), means love, liking, intimacy, attachment, friendship and, in the form philo, it appears in the composition of over one hundred verbs produced by its addition to a root verb. A philodéspotos (φιλοδέσποτος) is someone who shows an attachment to his lord, philodoxía (φιλοδοξία) is a love of fame, philokómos (φιλοκόμος) is someone who has special concern for his or her hair, etc.[5] The word 'philosophy' is written according to the general rule for constructing words composed with philo. It means a love for something; in this case, for sophía. The context does not allow us to infer that the act of love was a substitute for the true wisdom possessed by the gods, just as philokalía is simply a love of beauty. Philo is a love for different occupations and things that encompass a special sphere in Greek culture.

What then is sophía? The word is most often translated as wisdom. Meanwhile, for a long time, sophía was not identified exclusively with wisdom in Greek literature. It was a word used in different contexts and with reference to different things, sometimes very prosaic, and not even always positive things. The word had appeared in Homer's works. In a passage describing the conflict of the Greeks and the Trojans we read the following:

> When he had thus spoken his feet bare him on; but the Achaeans firmly abode the oncoming of the Trojans, yet availed not to thrust them back from the ships, albeit they were fewer, nor ever could the Trojans break the battalions of the Danaans and make way into the midst of the huts and the ships. But as the carpenter's line maketh straight a ship's timber in the hands of a cunning workman, that is well skilled [εὖ εἰδῇ σοφίης] in all manner of craft by the promptings of Athene, so evenly was strained their war and battle.[6]

Sophía here means practical knowledge necessary for performing a certain craftsperson's work, in this case, carpentry. As carpenters prepare material to build a ship, they must know how and where to strike with the axe to hit the wood in the right place and to the right depth. A taut line is used that shows where the axe has struck and should strike but without cutting through the line. This is not at all easy. For this, the carpenter needs the knowledge and the ability of a master. We see this from the fact that it is Athena herself who teaches the Homeric carpenter. Sophía is the knowledge of a master. It is not at all theoretical

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5   Z. Abramowiczówna, ed., *Słownik grecko-polski* [Greek-Polish Dictionary] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965), 4:514–536.

6   Homer, *The Iliad*, 2 vols., trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heinemann 1924), bk. 15, 405–413.

knowledge or the famous wisdom of the seven sages. Homer is speaking of the practical knowledge of a master in its craft. This seems to be the chief shade of meaning the Greek word had in the later texts of most Greek authors.

The driver driving the chariot, the helmsman guiding the ship, the seer, the sculptor, the rhetorician, and even Apollo playing on the lyre, are figures in the dramas of Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes to whom *sophía* is ascribed precisely on account of their mastery. The mythical Linus in the work of Hesiod is also a master in composing verse. The seven Greek *sophoi* were admired for their lofty knowledge of a practical character, especially in politics.[7] Aeschylus writes that only someone who knows how to bring a benefit is a *sophos*. There is also a motif in which the poet admonishes us not to be more *sophos* than the gods.[8]

As for the pre-Socratic philosophers, there the word '*sophía*' rarely appears. In the texts of Xenophanes, it appears in the meaning of art.[9] We find the meaning closest to the interpretation of today in the texts of Heraclitus, who writes that the only wisdom (*sophía*) is to know in what direction everything is directed by everything;[10] only Zeus is truly wise (fr. 32); to hear the *Logos* wisely is to agree that all things are one (fr. 50).[11] Such an approach to *sophíais* is exceptional, since in the texts of the Greek dramatists, and even Plato, *sophía* is always knowledge with a practical bent, whether in art or morality.

The most varied palette of meanings for *sophía* appears in Plato's works. *Sophía* is knowledge connected with artistic skills,[12] the reason that directs the years, the seasons, and the months,[13] rightly ordered education acquired by the right educational policy,[14] knowledge as opposed to ignorance,[15] political wisdom as opposed to ignorance,[16] a knowledge of what is beneficial,[17] science,[18]

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7   W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 27.

8   Ibid., 16.

9   "At this date, 'art' is the natural translation of 'sophía' in such a writer as Xenophanes," Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 117n2.

10   "That which is wise is one: to understand the purpose which steers all things through all things"; fr. 41 in Kathleen Freeman, ed., *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, trans. Hermann Diels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 27.

11   Geoffrey S. Kirk and John E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 204.

12   Plat., *Rep.* 605a.

13   Plat., *Phlb.* 30c.

14   Plat., *Hipparch.* 228c.

15   Plat., *Euthphr.* 281e.

16   Plat., *Leg.* 691a.

17   Plat., *Hp. mai.* 296e.

18   Plat., *Tht.* 145e.

prudence as opposed to madness,[19] prudent self-mastery, which is the highest virtue of the soul,[20] moral virtue,[21] happiness,[22] justice,[23] eros,[24] practical knowledge in various domains, that possessed, for example, by the charioteer, or the helmsman.[25] Among these meanings, only a few are close to wisdom and philosophy, which we associate exclusively today with the word *sophía*. One of these meanings is found in the *Phaedrus* and it became the basis for interpreting philosophy as the love of wisdom. Socrates says, "I think, Phaedrus, that the epithet 'wise' (σοφόν) is too great and befits God alone; but the name 'philosopher' (φιλόσοφον), that is, 'lover of wisdom' or something of the sort would be more fitting and modest for such a man."[26]

On the surface, this fragment appears to confirm Reale's interpretation mentioned above, but this is not the case. When we take a closer look at the context in which Plato speaks of philosophy, we see that he is not thinking of philosophy as a science or as a system of organized knowledge. The theme of the entire dialogue is the composition of speeches, and so it is a rhetorical, and not a philosophical, context! Plato remarks that it is not enough to compose verses or speech with song on different topics, but the theme should be serious, the speech should be true, and the author should furthermore show what a 'poor speech' is. Only then does he merit the title of a lover of wisdom; that is, a philosopher, for the title of wise is reserved for God. Evidently, the wisdom of which Plato speaks is not theoretical wisdom, the love of which produces philosophy as a science. It is still wisdom conceived in the traditional sense in Greek culture as *sophia*, that is, a masterful and intelligent dexterity or skill in different domains, and in this case skill in composing a good speech.[27]

We should also understand the word 'sophist' in this sense, is not meant as a wise person, but as an expert in teaching; for the sophists were also pedagogues, who above all boasted of their skill in teaching.[28]

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19   Plat., *Prt*. 332a.

20   Plat., *Prot*. 358c.

21   Plat., *Alc*. 133c–d.

22   Plat., *Euthyd*. 279e; Pseudo-Plato *Theag*. 124b.

23   Plat., *Resp*. 351c.

24   Plat., *Sym*. 204b.

25   Pseudo-Plato, *Theag*. 124b–d.

26   Plato, *Phaedrus*. In *Works*, trans. Harold N. Fowler (London: Heinemann, 1925), 278d. OCLC: 498556106.

27   If another meaning can be given to this passage in the *Phaedrus*, then it would certainly be under a Neoplatonic influence, which so strongly colored the interpretation of Plato's view in the history of philosophy.

28   Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002, 17–21.

For Plato, there was also a second meaning of *sophía*, which is closer to philosophy than to practical skill, which is found in the famous dialogue, the *Phaedo*. Here, the word '*sophía*' has a strict connection with philosophy. Plato remarks that a human being desires to know justice in itself, beauty in itself, and truth in itself, but these exist in an immaterial way.

A difficulty arises here, for on earth, human beings possess physical bodies, and they acquire knowledge with the help of the senses, which hinders them in obtaining pure knowledge. Death brings disintegration, and death, as it frees the soul from the body, allows the soul to acquire what the human being could not achieve during its lifetime and of which the human being can only be a lover, and this thing is wisdom.[29] Such a view is close to that of the Pythagoreans, but despite everything, it differs from theirs, and despite everything, there is an essential difference between the Pythagorean and Platonic conception of the love of wisdom. Plato does not say that the gods are wise and that human beings can only move closer to them (as the school of Pythagoras taught), but that the human soul is wise as long as it has been philosophizing and when it is separated from the body, for then it is commensurate—as immaterial—to its object, which are the ideas.[30]

Isocrates, the founder of a school of rhetoric and a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle, treated philosophy as an intellectual skill that allowed one to make proper decisions in private and public affairs. It is a skill analogous to gymnastics, which in its turn shapes the body and so allows performance of various movements.[31] The exercise of the intellect must be connected with the ability to verbalize thought in the most fitting way, and so, with the help of different types of discourse.[32] Philosophy has a practical dimension, not a theoretical dimension. It contains knowledge that is suitably verbalized and concerns both personal and public matters.[33] Here philosophy is not a separate

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[29] If we are ever to know anything absolutely, we must be free from the body and must behold the actual realities with the eye of the soul alone. And then, as our argument shows, when we are dead we are likely to possess the wisdom which we desire and claim to be enamoured of, but not while we live." Plat. *Phaedo* 66d–e.

Cf. Plato, *Euthyphro: Apology; Crito; Phaedo; Phaedrus*, trans. Harold N. Fowler and W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1966).

[30] For this reason, it is difficult to agree with Burnet's interpretation, who remarked that Plato, in the *Phaedo*, presented the Pythagorean conception of philosophy; cf. *Early Greek Philosophy*, 83.

[31] Isoc. 15, 181.

[32] Ibid., 183.

[33] George Norlin, Introduction to *Isocrates In Three Volumes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1:xxvi–xxvii.

science possessing its own object, method, and purpose. That conception of *sophía* and philosophy did not appear until Aristotle. Over time, it became fixed in the history of philosophy, but this did not happen immediately. The chief work devoted to philosophy as a science (the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics*) was not published until the first century BCE.[34]

The name Metaphysics, where one finds sophía, was not the name Aristotle used himself in relation to the fourteen books, which later came be called 'metaphysics' by his successors.[35] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Stagyrite returns many times to the problem of *sophía* in connection with human moral conduct and happiness, which is the end-purpose of conduct. *Sophía* is mentioned as one of the things that people claim to bring to human beings happiness; others include virtue, prudence, pleasure, and prosperity. In this context, Aristotle does not explain what he means by *sophía*, saying only that it is a matter of 'a certain *sophía*' (σοφία τίς).[36]

In another passage, Aristotle refers to the most widely accepted understanding of *sofia* in Greek literature. The most widely accepted understanding of *sophía* refers to art; it is both a feature of the best artists, and it is mastery in an art.[37]

Sophía appears next as a stable disposition that allows one to gain knowledge of truth. There are five such dispositions: art (τέχνη), science (ἐπιστήμη), prudence (φρόνησις), *sophía* (σοφία), and intellectual intuition (νοῦς).[38]

Besides the *sophía* that is connected with a specialized body of knowledge, there is also general (ὅλος) *sophía*. As general in character, it is knowledge of the highest principles and of what follows from them. Since intellectual intuition concerns the highest principles, and scientific knowledge concerns conclusions, *sophía* would include intellectual intuition (principles) and scientific knowledge (conclusions). By this conception, the highest objects of scientific knowledge would be the object of *sophía*.[39] Such *sophía* is also the highest kind of knowledge. It has a theoretical character, which can be contrasted to the practical character of prudence. Aristotle also mentions Anaxagoras and Thales as examples of men who were thought to have *sophía*, but not prudence

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34   Pierre Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* [The Problem of Being in Aristotle] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977), 29.

35   Brief mention is also made in passages of the *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, and *Eudemian Ethics*.

36   Aristot. *EN*. 1.8, 1098b20; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heinemann, 1934).

37   Aristot. *EN*. 6.6, 1141a9.

38   Ibid., 6.3, 1139b15.

39   Aristot. *EN*. 6.3, 1139b.15–20.

(φρόνησις). They did not study what was in their own interest (ἴδοσιν), or what was profitable (συμφερόντα), but studied the unusual (περίττα), the wonderful (θαυμάστα), the difficult (χαλεπά) and the divine (δαιμονία).[40]

Sophía differs from prudence in that it does not establish what means lead to happiness.[41] Only *sophía* conceived in that way provides human beings with happiness.[42] Aristotle follows this line of thought in the last books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, wherein he shows humanity's highest happiness, which is connected with the operation of the highest human faculties, that is, with reason. It is then that *sophía* is identified with philosophy.[43]

Only then does Aristotle consistently direct the understanding of *sophía* to wisdom and to philosophy. This happens because the Stagyrite, as in many other cases, makes precise distinctions that allow him to extract in an objectively justified way (as the major analogate) the most fundamental meaning from among many meanings of a word.

Sophía is a body of knowledge; it is masterful knowledge. However, there are different kinds of knowledge and these are arranged in a hierarchy. Somehow, the ambiguity of the word *sophía* did not hinder Aristotle's predecessors, and moreover they did not remark on this very important hierarchy of different kinds of knowledge. It is the highest knowledge, which includes first principles and what follows from them; it refers to what in reality is supreme and divine. Such a body of knowledge can be called *sophía* in the most proper sense, and strictly speaking it is wisdom. This wisdom does not have any immediate utilitarian significance, which is obvious because it is an end in itself.

An end is useful, but an end-purpose that constitutes a good in itself is something higher than a means. It does not need to be useful to be good and worthy of desire. Despite the variety of opinions on happiness, objectively (by nature), that which in humanity is the highest must be the highest good, and this is reason (the highest faculty in human beings), the operation of reason (the highest operation), reason's object (the first and divine principles). If happiness so conceived is the highest good, then on account of being loved, *sophía*

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40   Ibid., 6.7, 1141b.1–8.

41   Ibid., 6.11, 1143b.18.

42   Ibid., 6.12, 1144a.1.

43   "Again, we suppose that happiness must contain an element of pleasure; now activity, in accordance with wisdom (σοφία), is admittedly the most pleasant of the activities in accordance with virtue: at all events it is held that philosophy (φιλοσοφία) contains pleasures of marvelous purity and permanence, and it is reasonable to suppose that the enjoyment of knowledge is a still pleasanter occupation than the pursuit of it. Also the activity of contemplation will be found to possess in the highest degree the quality that is termed self-sufficiency." Aristot., *EN.* 10.7, 1177a.23–27.

becomes *philosophía*. The love of wisdom is love for the highest knowledge of a scientific character, higher than moral or artistic knowledge.

The knowledge to which *sophía* refers can only be loved, because it concerns what is not useful and not practical. Hence, as loved, it is philosophy. This kind of knowledge allows us to perform the best and highest acts, which give happiness. Such a life becomes divine because it is an expression of the operation of the highest faculty in human beings, reason, which only the gods possess. But human beings cannot live only by thinking. When it takes place, although only briefly ('insignificant in extent'), by its power and preciousness it exceeds all others.[44] Aristotle here indicates the divine element in humanity, and indicates contemplation as the highest human act. In this act is found *sophía*, and the love of this is philosophy.

What does the *Metaphysics* bring to our understanding of *sophía* and *philosophía*? The *Metaphysics* is primarily the quest for this *sophía*, the highest body of knowledge. These books do not bear the name *metaphysica*, but wisdom (*sophía*), first philosophy (πρώτη φιλοσοφία; *prima philosophía*), and theology (θεολογική; *theologia*). Aristotle tries to reach to the highest type of knowledge. In the first book, he mentions different steps of knowledge. The lowest is that of sensory impressions, which belong to animals and human beings. Next, Aristotle notes that only some animals possess memory, while others do not. Finally, the highest step is to something that is proper only to human beings, that which provides general cognition. Human beings, in possessing impressions, memory, and experience can also learn causes. Wisdom begins here; it is the cognition of causes. Persons who have mastered their art, where art is understood as being a skill for producing something based on one's knowledge of causes, are wise. Such persons possess more wisdom than someone who only has experience and knows what takes place, but does not know why it takes place. Wisdom therefore admits of degrees. One who knows causes in some narrow domain will be less wise than one who knows the first cause of everything. The second is *sophía* in the most proper sense of the word.[45]

After he distinguishes the types of cognition, Aristotle connects *sophía* with wisdom. This time he devotes more attention to causes as characteristic of wisdom-knowledge. Wisdom should unveil the first principles and causes. Philosophical thought becomes the act of knowing causes.

Although Aristotle mentions that everyone thinks that *sophía* is the cognition of first causes, he is the first to make such an explicit transition from

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44   Ibid., 10.7, 1177b.25–1178a.8.

45   Aristot. *Met.* 1.1–3; cf. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2., ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. W.D. Ross. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

sophía to *philosophía* precisely as the cognition of first causes.[46] This is possible because Aristotle refines the meanings of words that in everyday use are ambiguous and which obscure what different types of knowledge are, including scientific knowledge. Philosophy is the love of a kind of cognition that is the highest type of cognition because of the faculty involved, its operation, and its object. At the same time, such cognition is true happiness because it is the highest act that human beings are capable of achieving, and happiness consists precisely in activating what is highest in the nature of a being.

Having distinguished the type of cognition, its object (being qua being; *ens inquantum ens*), and the method of knowledge (the first principles and causes), Aristotle can explore with more precision what being is and what sort of causes are in question. At this point, *sophía* can be more precisely called *prote philosophía*, where being turns out to be substance (οὐσία) in the first degree, and can even be called *theologiké*, or theology, since the divine substance is the first substance, and the first causes as immortal and immutable possess divine features.

Is *philosophía* only an approach to the wisdom that God possesses? In the context of Heraclitus's views, such a view would be justified, especially with the pantheistic characteristic of God. Human beings share in the cognition of the *Logos*, but this cognition is not as perfect as Divine cognition. The problem is more difficult in the case of Aristotle. In Aristotle's system, God does not know the world but only knows himself. Since God did not create the world, then the knowledge he has of himself does not provide knowledge of the world.[47] The possession of divine knowledge as divine cannot be the ideal of human cognition, for it is not knowledge of all being. The only thing for which human beings can envy God is an act of cognition that is constant, while humanity reaches it only at times and briefly.[48] In this context, the interpretation of the word *philosophía* as cognition close to divine cognition can only apply to an act of cognition, but not to the content of that act. It seems that the interpretation proposed by Reale carries strong Neoplatonic influences.

The word '*philosophía* 'expresses love of knowing for the sake of knowing. The word differentiates this cognition from cognition with a utilitalian character that has some benefit for its end rather than simply to know. The word '*sophía*' is still located in the area of practical knowledge. *Philosophía* allows us to differentiate a type of cognition that by its nature (faculty, act, and object) is not utilitarian because it is an end in itself. This refinement in the meaning

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46   Ibid. 1.1, 981b 27–29.

47   Ibid., 12.9.

48   Aristot., *EN*. x 7.

of the word '*philosophía*' was the work of Aristotle. Philosophy is the love of a certain type of knowledge. It is a knowledge that is connected with everything in search of the first causes and principles, the highest human act, an act that gives human beings happiness. *Philo* does not mean the way to wisdom, but it is a love of wisdom that is not utilitarian, moral, or religious, but is theoretical or contemplative.

From Philosophy (*philosophía*) to Meta-Physics (*tà metà tà physiká*)

To present the history of philosophy, we usually begin with Thales. This Ionian thinker was already regarded in ancient times as the first philosopher. Thales was a philosopher because he put no value on having an estate, a political career, or art (especially poetry), but he prized truth and contemplation, and knowledge for the sake of knowledge. His successors, such as Pythagoras and Anaxagoras, were the same; there are anecdotes illustrating their contempt for what was pleasurable and practical and how they preferred to seek and know the truth without any ulterior motives.[1]

Philosophy as a science and reflection on philosophy as a science matured much later in Greek thought. A science is systematized in some way, has a clearly defined goals and objects (material and a formal objects), and it uses a fitting method. Science in this respect did not take shape until the pre-Socratics.

Even when we read of philosophy in Plato, the word '*philosophía*' covers a range of meanings that do not necessarily imply a science in the strict sense. Philosophy enables one to choose the best way of life;[2] it teaches us to live in harmony with nature;[3] it helps a ruler to rule the state well by knowledge of what is eternal, especially the Good, the Beautiful, and the Just;[4] it helps to separate the soul from the body;[5] it is love of knowledge that reveals the essence of things that have always existed;[6] it seeks what is real and essential;[7] it is love for all the objects of the sciences;[8] it is love of Truth;[9] it is love of being and truth;[10] and it has in it something divine.[11]

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1   Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia. The Ideals of Greek Culture*. Vol. 1. *Archaic Greece.* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1946–1947), 153–154.

2   Plat., *Rep*. 618c.

3   Plat., *Laws*. 890a.

4   Plat., *Rep*. 484 B; 520a–d; 484d.

5   Plat., *Phaedo*. 67d.

6   Plat., *Rep*. 485a.

7   Ibid., 490a–b.

8   Ibid., 475b–c.

9   Ibid., 475e, 476b.

10   Ibid., 501d.

11   Plat., *Soph*. 216a.

From this short survey, we can see that philosophy has, besides its theoretical end, a moral end, a political end, and even an eschatological end (the separation of the soul from the body). As it includes the objects of many sciences, or even all the sciences, philosophy is a sort of omni-science. Nonetheless, among all the descriptions of philosophy, there are some that concern the singularity of philosophical cognition, namely, that philosophy is love of truth, and it is a kind of knowledge directed at what is constant and eternal. At the same time, philosophy has been brought down to earth. Philosophers should rule the state because they know the archetypes that are most important for the state (which Plato called Ideas), the idea of justice, and the idea of good.

As we try to portray the Platonic vision of reality, we must locate the idea of the good at the very summit. The other ideas, including the idea of being, are below the idea of the good. At the very bottom, we find the material world, in which human beings live. The sphere of numbers is intermediate between the ideal world and the material world.

The name philosophy is applied to different kinds of knowledge that refer to different spheres of reality, but dialectic is the highest kind of philosophy. Dialectic is the science that enables us to know ideas, what they are and how they are arranged in an hierarchy.[12] We learn about numbers with the help of mathematics, and mathematics is also included under philosophy. Philosophy conceived in this way is a kind of knowledge concerned with truth; and as knowledge, it is scientific; that is, it has as its object something constant and necessary. Philosophy in this conception is still not distinct from the particular sciences, because they also have been described as philosophy. All scientific knowledge is philosophical knowledge, because being scientific, knowledge must refer to ideas (or numbers) and enable one to know truth for the sake of truth.

Aristotle presented a series of objections against Plato's theory of Ideas, and against his own conception of philosophy. Plato himself had already advanced some of these objections, but they were directed more to internal problems in the theory of Ideas. The most noteworthy argument was that the principle of finding ideas on the basis of similarity leads to an infinite regress. It is not enough to have an idea based upon similarity between specific, human individuals. That will lead to another idea based on the similarity between specific human individuals and the concept of human beings, which will lead yet to an even more general idea expressing similarities between human beings and other categories of being, ad infinitum. Aristotle attacked the theory of ideas

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12   George M.A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (London: Methuen, 1935), 239–240.

on the basis of Plato's own system expressed in *Parmenides*.[13] He thought that there are no ideas in the sense of independent and superior beings. There is no reason to think that the ideas exist, since the presence of stable and necessary concepts in our minds can be explained without resorting to ideas. Aristotle stated that concepts arise by induction or abstraction (*epagogé*), and the source of this process is the material reality around us. Concrete and individual material beings really exist, and as we come to know them, we perform abstraction and create general concepts. Generality is connected with the mode of human cognition, not with a thing's mode of existence. There is no human being as such, horse as such, or tree as such, but only particular human beings, particular horses, and particular trees. The Platonic Ideas are only hypostases of our concepts. They are not real beings.

If it is a question of beings that exist apart from matter, they are pure substances. The highest of these, God, cannot be directly known by human beings; only that highest substance knows itself. Aristotle rejected the theory of Ideas and replaced it with the theory of form (which mostly exists together with matter). This theory meets the conditions for an object of scientific cognition; Form replaced Plato's Idea.

In his polemics with the Platonic theory of Ideas, Aristotle encountered a serious methodological difficulty, one that he thought could make it impossible to construct a single science concerning reality as a whole. For Plato, philosophy as dialectics had the world of ideas as its object. Aristotle, still situated in the Platonic convention, asked whether there could, in fact, be one science concerning all beings. If so, that science would have to have a single object and would concern something that under some aspect is one. The idea of the good and the idea of being, the idea of the good as the highest idea, and the idea of being as the idea of everything, were brought to center stage. Here, Aristotle confidently asserted, "there is no single body of knowledge concerning being, or concerning the good."[14] In other words, there is no single pan-philosophy, and we cannot speak of philosophy as a single science that covers all reality. Why was this so? Aristotle said that the good and being are different, and that they are located in different categories that cannot be reduced one to the other. He explains:

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13   Plat., *Parm*. 132b. Another objection was an attempt to ridicule the theory of ideas by seeking ideas for trivial things such as hair, mud, or wax. Another concerned the question of how the same form could exist in the whole in different things and still remain one; cf. Grube, *Plato's Thought*, 32–34.

14   Aristot., *Eud. Eth*. 1, 1217b.

> For being ... means substance, quality, magnitude, and time, and further,
> that it moves or it is a cause of motion, and the good is situated in all
> these categories; in substance—the mind and god, in quality—justice, in
> quantity—measure, and in time—the opportune time, which that which
> teaches and is taught enters into the scope of the category of motion. As
> being it is not something that is one in relation to the categories men-
> tioned, and so also the good is not. There is no one body of knowledge
> concerning being, or concerning the good.[15]

There is no single category of being, some 'all-being.' Rather, there are differ-
ent categories of being that cannot be reduced one to the other, because a
human being as a being is one thing, being as movement is another, and being
as the time in which a human being does something is yet another. Likewise,
there are different categories of good; there is no single 'all-good.' Eating for
someone hungry is a good, taking a walk for someone sick is a good, but eat-
ing and taking a walk are different goods. Aristotle notes that even goods that
are in the same category do not necessarily belong to one body of knowledge.
The concept of 'opportune time' enters into the scope of different sciences de-
pending on whether it is a question of nourishment (the medical art) or of
military matters (strategy). Knowing the right time to administer medicine is
something other than knowing the right time to attack.[16] Aristotle, since he
was a realist, looked at philosophical problems by relating them to the reality
around us, and so Platonic idealism seemed too schematic and too far removed
from reality.

   The discussion with Plato showed that the status of philosophy with respect
to its object and purpose had not yet been settled. By the same token, it would
be hard to speak of a single method if there were no single science. Gradu-
ally, the difference between philosophy as the love of knowledge in the par-
ticular sciences and philosophy as the science concerning everything became
established.

   Aristotle worked to establish philosophy in the second sense in the last
phase of his work; the crowning point is to be found in the books that would
later be called the *Metaphysics.* His points of doubt were collected primarily
in the third book (B). These doubts were called *aporiai* (ἀπορέω); that is, situ-
ations in which the intellect sees no way of getting through (from ἀ- (not),
and πορεύω, (to convey, in the passive form, to proceed). When faced with an

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15   Ibid., 1217b 25–26; cf. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 178.
16   Ibid.

aporia, the intellect faces some difficulty and cannot proceed.[17] At least half of Aristotle's *aporiai* concern the problem of the unity of philosophy. How can philosophy be a single science: (1) if it concerns the four different causes and principles;[18] (2) if different types of substance occur in the world, including material and immaterial substances;[19] (3) if besides substance, there are other categories of being;[20] (d) if an infinite number of individuals are found in the world;[21] and (e) if Being and Unity are not principles (elements) of being.[22]

These difficulties accumulated not only in the context of Aristotle's philosophy, but also in the context of the history of philosophy. Aristotle's predecessors were clearly philosophers, but they did not face the methodological question of philosophy as a science different from the other sciences and possessing its own single object. How much weight Aristotle attached to this question is seen in the fact that in the books that follow, he returned to the difficulties mentioned and looked for ways to resolve them. As Joseph Owens observes, Aristotle found such a resolution by resorting to '*pros hen*' predication, later called the analogy of attribution.[23]

Still, there was no single name that would properly indicate the object of this science. The name 'philosophy' turned out to be too ambiguous, and most of all, it was meta-objective. The names of the other sciences usually indicated the object of their inquiries: physics is the science concerning nature (φύσις), psychology is the science concerning the soul (ψυχή), and ethics, or the science of conduct (ἐθικός). But even here, there was no shortage of difficulties. The word 'φύσις' can refer to the *Physics* by itself, to the treatise *On Generation and Corruption*, or to the treatise *On the Heavens*, where the heavens were regarded as a part of nature.[24]

If we call philosophy love of wisdom, then it remains an open question what its object is. What its object is does not follow from the word 'wisdom,' and even less from the expression 'love of wisdom.' Until Aristotle's time, philosophy

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17   Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 214–215.

18   Aristot., *Met.* A 1, 10.

19   Ibid., Aporia 3, 5.

20   Ibid., Aporia 4.

21   Ibid., Aporia 8.

22   Ibid., Aporia 11.

23   Owens, *Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 456; for further elaboration on this point, see this book, pt. 3, Chap. 10.

24   Cf. Vianney Décarie, "*Le titre de la 'Métaphysique'*" [The Title of 'Metaphysics']. In *Herméneutique et ontologie* [Hermeneutics and Ontology], 1st rev. ed., ed. Rémi Brague and Jean-François Courtine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 125.

was, with regard to its object, a descriptive word covering different domains of knowledge, chiefly theoretical knowledge, but in some cases, also practical knowledge (morality, politics). It did not extend to productive knowledge (craftsmanship). In the framework of philosophy, the question arises, which of these domains is first. Which domain is first philosophy? What is its object?

For Aristotle, these questions were very important, and he searched for solutions to them. His philosophy was not a closed and finite system, but a series of quests (ἀεὶ ζητούμενον).[25] The Stagyrite does not give only one name for this domain of philosophy, but several, and even so, he rarely gives it a name at all. Aristotle uses the word 'wisdom' (*sophía*) or 'first wisdom' most often when referring to the domain of philosophy.[26] He uses the term 'first philosophy' (πρώτη φιλοσοφία) once (or twice if we accept Book K as authentic or at least treat it as a summary of the preceding book),[27] and 'theology' (θεολογία).[28] The term 'wisdom' was burdened with ambiguity, and furthermore, it was too general. In turn, it is not enough that the other names appear only once. In fact, in a key text in Book E, they are treated as identical with each other: *prote philosophía* and *theologiké* designate a science concerned with things that are separated and not in motion, with first causes, which are eternal, unchanging, and separated, with being qua being and its properties. That science was regarded as the first science.[29]

Three centuries after Aristotle's death, his esoteric works were published (the first century BCE). As they were re-edited, a completely new name for them appeared.[30] This name was 'τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά.' The first preserved record

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25   Aristotle, *Met.*, 7.1, 1028b2–3.

26   Ibid., 981a, 981b, 982a, 992a, 995b, 996b, 1004b, 1005b, 1059a, 1060a, 1061b, 1075b.

27   Ibid., 1026a, 1061b.

28   Ibid., 1026a, 1064b.

29   In Book K, the authenticity of which is suspect, and which is a sort of summary of Books B, G, and E, 'first philosophy' also only appears once, but in a different way from that found in Book E, because it appears as the science that studies the foundations of mathematics. However, it is not directly identified with theology, which, as found in Book E, is the universal science concerning both the most worthy being and concerning being qua being; cf. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 39–40.

30   Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor in the Lyceum, passed on Aristotle's esoteric works to Neleus, including the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics*, and the entire library. Neleus brought the entire collection to Scepsis in Troas. The library was purchased in the first century BCE by Appelicon of Teos, who brought it with him when he returned to Athens. Sulla appropriated the books and brought them to Rome, where Tyrannion the grammarian bought them and started to organize Aristotle's legacy. Andronicus of Rhodes continued his work; ibid., 23.

of the name can be found in the work of Nicholas of Damascus (the first half of the first century CE). It is noteworthy that all the Greek commentaries do not use a single word (or even a composite word) but use the composite expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. This would suggest that we are still dealing with a descriptive expression, not with the name of a science in the strict sense.

Even in Arabic, into which the work of Aristotle had been translated, we are dealing with an expression made of several words: '*ma ba'da at-tabi'a*'. The expression was finally combined into one word in Latin. The single Latinized word, '*metaphysica*' would have an unusual career, and would be dominant from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, when it would have to compete with the word ontology.

The expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά referred to the collection of fourteen books to which Aristotle did not give a single name. However, ancient commentators did not inquire about the author of the new name; they believed that the name came from Aristotle.[31]

Many interpretations and many legends arose later about how the word 'metaphysics' came about. There is hardly any controversy over who coined the term, but even in this there are some differences of opinion. Most likely it was Andronicus of Rhodes (first century BCE), but Eudemus of Rhodes or Ariston of Chios are also candidates for this honor.[32]

What did this expression mean, this expression that was unknown to the ancient Greeks? There were and are different interpretations. In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, we read that Aristotle wrote this work after his works on physics and for this reason it is called 'after physics.'

Most often, scholars opine that the new name was introduced for editorial reasons. As Andronicus continued the work of re-editing Aristotle's works (a work started by the grammarian Tyrannion), he put fourteen books together that had not originally been collected together; these books were written after Aristotle's writings on physics.[33] Hence, the expression '*τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*' appeared. The Greek prefix and preposition τὰ μετὰ has several meanings: amidst, between, together (connected with the genitive case); it also denotes succession in time or space: after, at the end, further, afterward (connected with the accusative case).[34] The precise meaning of the expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά is 'after physics.' According to interpretations based on ideas found in modern

31   Décarie, "*Le titre de la 'Métaphysique*,'" 121.

32   Ibid., 29–30.

33   P. Jaroszyński, "Lykejon" [Lyceum]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 6:601.

34   *Słownik grecko-polski*, 3:114–115.

publications of Aristotle's works, the expression should be translated as, 'writings following writings in the area of physics.'

We are struck here by an interesting thing: the new expression does not appear as a single word, metaphysics, but as a composite expression 'after physics.' In light of the editorial interpretation, this would be a descriptive word that directly points to another science, physics, but is neither related to the object of this science and nor to its own objects of inquiry, such as being or God.

There the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* is meta-objective in two ways: It does not show any reference to any object of its own (as physics points to *φυσικά*), but it is the name of a discipline that refers to a second discipline and that second discipline's object. The new discipline, which Aristotle called 'first philosophy' or 'wisdom,' was located after the writings in the area of physics. For that reason, Andronicus referred to this new discipline as *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*. Its doubly meta-objective character is seen in the fact that it is not a single name (even a single complex name) but an expression clearly composed of several separate elements; in addition, the expression has an elliptical character.[35] Because of its meta-objective character, we do not know what kind of discipline it is or what its proper object is in a positive sense. If still other sciences came after physics (such as mathematics, which is right after physics in the Aristotelian hierarchy), we would then have several metaphysics, none of which would be the same science. Such an editorial explanation of the term, '*τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*' is, therefore, insufficient to our purposes.

The second interpretation of *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* is objective in character because it relates the word '*τὰ μέτα*' not to another science, but to a kind of reality. This reality is something that is above *φύσις*, that is, above nature. The word '*φυσικά*' (from the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*) in this case would designate everything located in the order of nature. The word would not designate a science about nature. Nature conceived of as '*φύσις*' is, "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute."[36] Thus, the concept of nature refers to that which is subject to motion and possesses a principle of change in itself and essentially. It takes in, first of all, 'bodies and magnitudes,' which are subject to change and perform corresponding motions.[37]

The motion spoken of here is the motion of beings in which, while we can discern a form, the form is always found in some matter.[38] If we look at nature

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35   The question then arises, when was the single term 'metaphysics' coined?

36   Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, 2.1, 192b20–23.

37   Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, trans. J.L. Stocks (circa 350 BCE), 1.1, 268a1–4.

38   Aristot., *Physics* 2.2, 194b 11–13.

from an Aristotelian worldview, we become aware that his way of looking at the world was quite different from that which is common today because then, it included the entire universe. This is reflected even in the terminology that Aristotle used, which differs significantly from that which we use today. The word '*οὐρανός*' is usually translated as heaven or heavens. The word 'heaven' today has a religious connotation, which refers to God or spiritual life in God, as well as its mundane meaning, which refers to everything found in the visible expanses beyond the Earth. Aristotle's heaven on the other hand, could refer to the substance of the furthest corner of the universe, or to the bodies that are next to the furthest area of the universe, such as the Moon, the Sun, and certain stars, or again, it could refer to the universe as a whole.[39] As Aristotle explains, "beyond heaven there is no place, no vacuum, and no time."[40] This does not mean at all that there is nothing beyond heaven. There is nothing in a spatial sense. Space is something with a correlation to matter, and not every being has to be material in order to be a being. Beyond space, there abides beings that are unchanging and unaffected by anything else, beings that have a "duration [that is] unalterable and unmodified, living the best and the most self-sufficient of lives."[41]

As we consider such a picture of the universe, we can see easily in what direction the objective interpretation of the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* went. It would be the science concerning everything—all of earthly nature and all that is above and beyond the senses; what is, in the end, supernatural, eternal, and divine. Such a science is logically inscribed into the Aristotelian picture of reality. The Neoplatonic commentator on Aristotle, Simplicius (490–560 CE) presented just this interpretation of the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*.[42] The science *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* concerns beings that are completely separate from matter and which exist above nature.[43]

Yet, we should consider something that Pierre Aubenque does not bring out, namely, that Simplicius's interpretation appears in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, but not in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This is important because in the *Physics*, we read of a science different from physics. Therein, this science is called 'first philosophy' and is concerned with what exists

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39   Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 1.9, 278b 14–22.

40   Ibid., 1.9, 279a 13–14.

41   Ibid., 1.9, 279a 21–22.

42   Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 31.

43   Simplicius, *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria* [Simplicius's Commentary on Aristotle's Physics], ed. Hermann Diels (Berolini, typis et impensis G. Reimeri, 1882), lib. I, 17–21.

in separation from matter, or, more precisely, that which is above the universe.[44] The controversy pertains to what is said in the *Metaphysics*, not in the *Physics*.

While Simplicius's interpretation is written in the context of Aristotle's *Physics*, it raises doubts in the case of the fourteen books of the new science. First, if one follows Simplicius's explanation, only one book concerns a substance that exists above the universe (bk. 12), which is the divine substance. And so, that book alone can we call τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. Second, nowhere in the *Physics* is there any mention of first philosophy as the science about being qua being. In what would later be called the *Metaphysics*, being qua being is just such an object of this science that stands at center stage. Third and finally, the Greek word 'μέτα,' as Aubenque rightly notes, has a rather pejorative connotation; it designates something inferior and mean. By the same token, the word 'μέτα,' in this case, would be inadequate to be applied to the Divine Being.[45]

Despite Aubenque's suggestion, the Latin term '*transphysica*' (transcend), which appears in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, does not correspond to Simplicius's interpretation of the expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. In this case, it is not the name of a science that has the same object as theology, but it differs only in its mode of cognition. The Latin prefix *trans-* is not a translation of the Greek word ὑπέρ (above).[46]

We find the same term '*transphysica*' early in the work of Albert the Great. Albert used pairs of terms or titles such as the 'divine science' or theology, metaphysics, or transphysics (*transphysica*). He used the term 'first philosophy' by itself. Transphysics denotes that it exceeds nature, which is limited by quantity and contrarieties, and it is a divine science because it refers to that which completes everything in a being. The being that it studies is not limited to one thing or another, but it seeks to comprehend that which was first created by God, and before which nothing had been created.[47]

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44   "and the physicist is concerned only with things whose forms are separable indeed, but do not exist apart from matter. Man is begotten by man and by the sun as well. The mode of existence and essence of the separable it is the business of the primary type of philosophy to define." Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.2, 194b 11–15.

45   Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 33–34.

46   "*Pour Saint Thomas, la métaphysique est la science des transphysica* (*In Met. A, Prologus*)*; c'est-à-dire des 'choses divines'*" (For Thomas, metaphysics is the science of transphysics (Aristot. *Met.*, Prologue); that is to say, 'divine things'). *ST* IIa IIae, IX, 2, obj. 2. "*Ayant le même objet que la théologie, elle n'en diffère que par le mode de connaissance*" (With the same purpose as theology, it differs in that the mode of knowledge), quoted in Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 31n2.

47   "*scientia transphysica vocatur: quoniam quia est natura quedam determinata quantitate vel contrarietate, fundatur per prinicipia esse simpliciter, quae transcendunt esse sic vocatur*

Thomas also moves in the same direction when he uses the terms 'divine science' or theology interchangeably with the terms 'metaphysics' (*metaphysica*) or 'transphysics' (*transphysica*), and 'first philosophy' (*prima philosophia*).[48] Thomas uses the terms '*scientia divina*' and '*theologia*' to mean knowledge of divine substances, and he uses the terms '*metaphysica*' or '*transphysica*' to expound upon the maximum universality of an object that transcends the order of categorical predication. The term 'transcendentals' (*transcendentalia*) appeared with respect to this transcendence (*transcendere*). The transcendentals are properties of being qua being, not merely categorial or specific properties. The word '*transphysica*' is also related to '*transcendere*,' because this science refers to being qua being, not to beings as limited to one of the ontic categories.

The third interpretation of the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* is epistemological in character: *μετὰ* designates stages of human cognition. Human cognition is a complicated enough process. It is not performed all at once, but in stages. A human being first gathers knowledge with the senses, and only then are concepts produced, followed by understanding. Understanding is a higher type of cognition than sense cognition, even though it appears later.

The Greek commentator Alexander of Aphrodisia (active in the late second and early third century CE) followed this path. He thought that first philosophy is the type of cognition that appears after cognition in the philosophy of

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physicum. Vocatur autem et divina: quia talia divina sunt et optima et prima omnibus aliis in esse paebentia complementum. Esse enim quod haec scientia considerat, non accipitur contractum ad hoc vel ad aliud sed potius prout est prima effluxio Dei et creatum primum, ante quod non est aliquid alium creatum"; *Alberti Magni … Metaphysica: Libros quinque priores* [Metaphysics: The First Five Books], 2 vols. ed. Bernhard Geyer (Münster: Monasterium Westfalorum in Aedibus Aschendorff, 1960), 1.1.

48   "*secundum igitur tria praedicta, ex quibus perfectio huius scientiae attenditur, sortitur tria nomina. Dicitur enim scientia divina sive theologia, inquantum praedictis substantias considerat. Metaphysica, inquantum considerat ens et ea quae consequuntur ipsum. Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis, sicut magis communia post minus communia. Dicitur autem prima philosophia, inquantum primas rerum causas considerat*" Therefore in accordance with the three things mentioned above from which this science derives its perfection, three names arise. It is called divine science or theology inasmuch as it considers the aforementioned substances. It is called metaphysics inasmuch as it considers being and the attributes which naturally accompany being (for things which transcend the physical order are discovered by the process of analysis, as the more common are discovered after the less common). And it is called first philosophy inasmuch as it considers the first causes of things."); Introduction to *Sententia Libri Metaphysicae* [Commentary on the Metaphysics], Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, trans of Latin by John P. Rowan, which varies considerably from the Greek of Aristotle, html-edited with addition of Latin and Greek by Joseph Kenny (1961).

nature, and therefore is described as *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*. He was looking here to the Aristotelian distinction between the order of being and the order of cognition. That which is first in human beings' cognition is last in being, and so human beings come to know lastly that which is first in being. According to Alexander of Aphrodisia, metaphysics concerns that which is first in being is most important in being but which human beings know only at the end, and so they know it after sense cognition (*μέτα*) and cognition concerning nature. Nature comes after the divine principles upon which it depends, but in the order of human cognition we know nature first and only afterward do we know the principles. This third interpretation of the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* would be meta-objective. This expression does not directly designate some sort of reality, but the way reality is known.[49]

The third interpretation is most in the spirit of Aristotle's philosophy, and in it, the mode of cognition is considered. In Book I, Aristotle showed the steps of cognition. The first step is sense cognition, and it is common to humans and animals. Memory is somewhat less common, and experience is still less common than memory. Mastery of art and reasoning is specific to human beings. Among the sciences, metaphysics is found at the summit, but wisdom is the most difficult. Aristotle wrote:

> We suppose first, then, that the wise man knows all things, as far as possible, although he has not knowledge of each of them in detail; secondly, that he who can learn things that are difficult, and not easy for man to know, is wise (sense-perception is common to all, and therefore easy and no mark of Wisdom); again, that he who is more exact and more capable of teaching the causes is wiser, in every branch of knowledge; and that of the sciences, also, that which is desirable on its own account and for the sake of knowing it is more of the nature of Wisdom than that which is desirable on account of its results, and the superior science is more of the nature of Wisdom than the ancillary.[50]

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49   Alexander of Aphrodisia, *In Met., Prooem.* 3, 28–30; cf. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 32–33. It is noteworthy here that Alexander's whole commentary only covers the first books (up to Book V), while the rest of the commentaries only have the form of *scholia* (commentary). Asclepius also proposed an interpretation of the meaning of the expression *τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* that was similar to Alexander's: after physics, which means that one should first study physics, and only later, first philosophy; cf. Geert Verbeke, "Aristotle's Metaphysics Viewed by the Ancient Greek Commentators." In *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 116, 119.

50   Aristot., *Met.* 1.2, 982a 8–18; cf. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2.

Physics is not the leading science, because it is limited to substances that exist in matter and which are in motion. Instead, wisdom will be considered as first philosophy, which is identified with theology, because it concerns substances that exist without matter but are, at the same time, the causes of material substances. We do not acquire knowledge of immaterial substances directly, but indirectly insofar as they are causes. Therefore cognition with wisdom is last in the order of human cognition, but it is first from the point of view of being because it concerns the highest beings.

The difference between Simplicius and Alexander of Aphrodisia concerns not the object of metaphysics as such, but rather the interpretation of the expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. When we inquire about the object of metaphysical cognition, we see that both commentaries speak of Divine Beings.[51] This does not mean that we are dealing with theology understood as a particular science, because divine substances are also the first substances upon which all other beings depend.[52] The expression 'being qua being' can mean the whole of a being that is in a relation of causation, including a relation to the first cause, but it can also mean the realization of being in the first substance. In this last case, the analysis of the first substance becomes an analysis of being qua being. This kind of interpretation indicates a special fusion of Aristotle with Plato.

Alexander of Aphrodisia held that Aristotelian theology is universal because it is first and foremost related to all of the other sciences, particularly insofar as it is a necessary condition for their existence because it concerns the first cause of being. Syrianus held the same view. In turn, Themistius went a step further and thought that God knows everything by knowing his own nature.[53]

Without going into details that properly belong to a systemic analyses, we want to emphasize that for the Greek commentators, the interpretation of the term τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά oscillated around the Divine Being in its universal dimension, whether as a being (the most perfect being, the first substance), as a cause (the being upon which the heavens and the earth depend), or as an intelligence that knows the principles of being. The Divine Being was found above nature, and even above the heavens (in the Aristotelian sense). Hence, whether in an objective sense (the hierarchy of beings) or in an epistemological sense

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51   This tendency was also found in other commentators. Themistius (fourth century CE) wrote paraphrases of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Among these, a paraphrase (in a Hebrew translation) of Book XII (devoted to God) is extant. Syrianus (fifth century CE) wrote commentaries on Aristotle and Plato and supported the theory of ideas; cf. Verbeke, "Aristotle's Metaphysics Viewed by the Ancient Greek Commentators," 107–127.

52   Ibid., 118, 121.

53   Ibid., 121.

(the human cognition of being), this divine substance appeared above nature in being and in cognition.

To summarize, the interpretation of the expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά was rooted in the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition with a greater or lesser amount of Neoplatonism mixed in. Certainly, we cannot say that the term was accidental or based on something that lacked reference to its object and how its object is known. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that the interpretation of the Greek commentators contained, in a greater or lesser degree, a Platonic subtext and consequently a Neoplatonic subtext as well. Hence, in this interpretation, the material aspect of the object of metaphysics was diminished.

Interesting enough, if the Divine Being is the object of Aristotelian metaphysics, there we must note that only one of the fourteen books actually concerns the Divine Being (bk 12). If such is the case, we cannot describe all the books as theology. An attempt to single out ontology (as Aubenque attempts) would mean that theology would be treated as a particular science. But the theology of which Aristotle speaks in Book VI of the *Metaphysics* is not a particular science, whereas the first philosophy mentioned in the *Physics* is a particular science. An attempt to put the emphasis on theology (even as universal theology) shows a dominance of Platonism and Neo-Platonism, in which the Aristotelian conception of God is changed. For Neoplatonists, God's knowledge is not limited to himself, and God is not only the final cause as it happens in theology of Aristotle.

Thus, the expression τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά is the name of both a philosophy and a science (a kind of rational cognition) whose object transcends nature, but at the same time it considers nature insofar as it is a being. Nature is a being, but not every being is 'natural.' There are also beings beyond nature. It is also the most difficult science for human beings to acquire, and so it comes after one has learned the natural sciences.

Certainly it is not an accidental, a purely external, or a mysterious name (an irrational name or one above reason). It was also the plan for a science that would meet the definite criteria of rationality that Aristotle had developed, a plan not completely realized.

From *tà metà tà physiká* to Metaphysics

After Aristotle's death, only his immediate successor Theophrastus raised questions that would later be called metaphysical.[1] In the extant fragments of Theophrastus's work, we do not find talk of being qua being, and the metaphysical problematic is primarily the theological problematic, concerned with principles that are divine.[2] When, in turn, Theophrastus died, the great scientific legacy of Aristotle (called the esoteric writings) vanished, and with them, the books devoted to first philosophy also perished. In the Lyceum, they were no longer concerned with being qua being or with the first principles.

Only three centuries after the Stagyrite's death, the legacy returned, primarily in the form of the esoteric writings of Aristotle intended for educated readers.[3] This happened because Tyrannion produced a new edition of Aristotle's works, and then Andronicus of Rhodes (the eleventh scholarch of the peripatetic school) did the same. Among these writings were found fourteen books without a single clear title. They began with a new reading of the text, which in the lifetime of the author was probably only a collection of notes from lectures (*logoi* or

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1   The oldest extant manuscripts (from the tenth century) of Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus, have been published as *Theophrastou tōn metà ta physiká*. [On the Metaphysics of Theophrastus], in *Pisma* [Selected Writings], trans. into Polish by D. Gromska, Jerzy Schnayder, and I. Dąmbska (Warsaw, 1963); cf. 113, 410n1; see also Theophrastus, *Metaphysics*, trans. Marlein van Raalte (Leiden: Brill, 1993). According to Ingemar Düring, the title 'Metaphysics' could not have come from Theophrastus. According to Düring, the original title was *The Science of What Is First* [*Peri ton proton theoria*]; cf. *Aristoteles* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverla, 1966), 591.

2   "How being is and of what sorts are beings, if there are more of them, this [we] should try to present in any way possible, whether by analogy or by another comparison. Thus perhaps [being] should be known after some sort of power and superiority over other things, as if of a god: for indeed the principle of the universe is divine everything exists and endures." Theophrastus, *Pisma*, 114.

3   Today, the word 'esoteric' means something occult and distant from science. In the Greek language, *esōterikós* literally means something external, but not occult. In the case of Aristotle's scientific writings, the intention was that they would be what could be analyzed by students properly prepared by the education they had received earlier. So today as well, writings in philosophy are not analyzed in newspapers or on television, but at university, and in this sense they are esoteric, that is, within the university.

pragmateia), but were not a finished work.[4] The collection was difficult to read because of the arrangement of the books and because of the topics contained in them.[5] After all, Aristotle himself had forewarned that these topics were the most precious for human beings, but also the most difficult.[6] The works of the Stagyrite that were saved and published were subjected to a procedure typical of Hellenistic culture, which was methodically assimilating the Greek legacy.[7] This procedure was called commentary. Commentaries were written not only in Hellenistic circles, but also in Syrian, Arabic, and Latin circles.

Commentaries: The Assimilation and Continuity of Culture

What was a commentary? Initially, commentaries consisted of notes simply to help their respective readers to remember particular ideas, or to locate particular passages. We find roots of 'commentary' in the Greek word '*hypomnemata,*' meaning note or reminder, and the Latin word '*commentārium,*' meaning notebook. Thus, at first, commentary had the character of an oral statement that was written as a didactic aid to further reading.[8] Over time, the notes began to take the form of commentaries in the proper sense that covered a broad palette of topics. Various problems and matters, both private and public that were not necessarily connected with science or education came into play.

A commentary of a strictly scientific character came to be called an exegesis (ἐξήγηση). An exegesis contained not only a relation dedicated to something, but also an elucidation and detailed analysis of the text. Such a commentary-exegesis became widespread in Hellenistic times, mainly in Alexandria, and it

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4   Werner Jaeger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* [Studies on the History of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*] (Berlin:Weidmann, 1912), 138–148; cf. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 75; H.B. Gottschalk, "The Earliest Aristotelian Commentators." In *Aristotle Transformed*, ed. Richard Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1990), 31.

5   Controversy continues to this day over whether the arrangement of the fourteen books was accidental or whether it holds some key of its own. According to Owens, the key points are the aporiai in Book B, the resolution of which is shown in order in the books that follow; cf. *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 69–106.

6   Aristot., *Met.* 1.2, 982a 6–982, b 11.

7   Andronicus did not include the *Hermeneutics* in his edition since he believed that it had not been written by Aristotle; cf. Gottschalk, "The Earliest Aristotelian Commentators," 56n2.

8   Karl Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*" [Review of Commentaries on Aristotle]. In Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed*, 38. The proof of this is that we first find oral readings in notes, in which the living voice of the lecturer is written down, that is, using certain forms of addressing the receiver as a listener and not as a reader.

was considered one of the highest literary forms.[9] Commentaries were written on works by authors known as authorities in the field of literary culture as a whole, such as poets, tragedians, comedic writers, historians, rhetoricians, representatives of the particular sciences (medicine, geography, mathematics, and astronomy), and finally philosophers.

Commentaries were not necessarily written with a view to publication. They were primarily for use in schools and were adapted to listeners at specific levels. Hence, an author would write several commentaries on a single work of another author, such as Aristotle, with various readers in mind (Galen). The commentary also had in view not only the development of some particular discipline, but the spreading of the discipline through didactics. But didactics required explanations. Thereby the legacy of the preceding epochs was constantly being preserved by the commentaries.

The structure of a commentary was carefully planned and varied. In one reading (*praxis*), there would first be a general discussion (*theoría*), and then it would pass on to the text (*lexis*).[10] In most cases, the source text was divided into parts. The length of the parts depended on how the text was to be received, with one length for reading audibly, another for reading silently. In the Alexandrian school, the custom arose of picking out a unit of text that could be read in an hour or less.[11] When the text was intended for someone who read silently, then at a relatively early date (already in the time of Aspasius (second century CE), the method of division into short fragments (*lemmata*) was adopted, and the commentator analyzed those fragments. Yet another form was to paraphrase what had been written in the respective text. Iamblichus, and following him, Themistius (fourth century CE), used the method of paraphrasing, although Themistius gave himself credit for inventing the new method, albeit it is probable that he did not write commentaries in the strict sense.[12]

The Arabs took up the method of commenting on short fragments (*lemmata*), a method spread by Alexander of Aphrodisia, and following Galen and Themistius, they introduced use of abbreviations (*epitome*) and paraphrasing. These last two forms had the virtue of providing greater freedom to

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9   Andrea Falcon, "Commentators on Aristotle," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta.

10   Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," 48.

11   Richard Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle." In *Aristotle Transformed.*, 8–9.

12   Cristina D'Ancona Costa, "Commenting on Aristotle: From Late Antiquity to the Arabic Aristotelianism." In *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter. Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung* [Commentaries in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Contributions to its Research], ed. Wilhelm Geerlings and Christian Schulze (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 225–226.

commentators in presenting their own interpretations.[13] Although Avicenna was known for paraphrasing and showed aversion to writing commentaries on short fragments, nevertheless, with the help of such a method, he wrote a commentary on a work called *Aristotle's Theology* (of which Aristotle was not the actual author).[14]

Exegesis on Sacred Scripture and on works in literature, rhetoric, law and medicine influenced the character of philosophical commentaries among the Christians.[15] Over time, the structure of the commentary changed. Initially, commentaries were glosses written in the margins to explain the more difficult passages; but later, for didactic and academic reasons, the *questio* and the *lectio* appeared. In the works of Thomas Aquinas, a *questio* is a problem (for example, the origin of creatures from God as discussed in the *Summa Theologiæ*[16]), which is divided into several articles, or questions (Art. 1. Is it necessary for every being to have been created by God? Art. 2. Is prime matter created by God?). The *lectio divina*, on the other hand, referred chiefly to the way Sacred Scripture was read, which, according to Origen, required concentration, love, and piety.[17] It was something more than a cold academic commentary, on account of the subject matter of the commentary, that is, contents revealed by God.

Paraphrase, which Avicenna preferred, found an imitator in Albert the Great. The method that Averroes used in what was called the long commentary, and which was present in the work of Alexander of Aphrodisia, in turn, influenced Thomas. It was to comment on one sentence after another in short passages.[18]

Averroes, who was called the Commentator, used three kinds of commentaries: a literal commentary, where a text would be analyzed word by word; a paraphrase, where a passage would be commented upon; and a synopsis, where he would briefly present and describe another author's position on some specific topic. Moreover, in Arabic literature, we may also encounter an imitation of the *lectio* and the *questiones* (something similar to the organized notes of students), and commentaries, that appealed to *aporiai*, after which propositions to resolve them were made.[19]

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13   Ibid., 243.

14   Ibid., 244.

15   Ibid., 202.

16   Ibid., 202–205.

17   Ibid., 202–206.

18   Ibid., 233.

19   Ibid., 234.

A lot of ancient commentaries have been irrevocably lost, either in whole (the commentaries of Adrastus and Aspasius) or in part (Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisia). Alexander of Aphrodisia was regarded for centuries as the model commentator (Gk. *exegetes*); he faithfully represented the thought of the Stagyrite, and his counterpart in greatness among the Neoplatonists was Simplicius.

Commentaries on Aristotle

As we have mentioned, commentaries on Aristotle began to be written with the re-edition of his works by Andronicus of Rhodes.[20] This continued without interruption into the eighth century CE, and then after two centuries, the tradition was revived again, and has continued to this day.[21]

We may mention several currents from ancient times and the medieval period. The first current began with Andronicus and ended with Themistius. The commentators included figures such as Boethius of Sidon, Athenodorus, Aristo of Alexandria (although this is somewhat uncertain), Eudorus, Alexander of Aegae, Sotion, Achaius, Adrastus of Aphrodisia, and Aspasius. These commentators regarded Aristotle's philosophy as a coherent whole; and so, their work was reduced chiefly to an effort to understand, explain, and defend his views. In their commentaries, they tried on the one hand, to explain the philosopher's position, and on the other hand, to defend him against the objections of his adversaries who represented other philosophical schools, especially the Platonists and the Stoics.

The attitude of these commentaries was best summed up by Alexander of Aphrodisia, who remarked that Aristotle's philosophical views were closer to the truth than those of the other philosophers, and he saw his task as simply

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20   Although difficult to believe, it was only then that Aristotle began to be more widely known among the Romans. The testimony of Cicero is important here. When Cicero writes about "some *Topics* of Aristotle," it is not surprising he writes to one of the rhetoricians of that time saying, "but the obscurity of the subject deterred you from the books; and that illustrious rhetorician to whom you had applied answered you, I suppose, that he knew nothing of these rules of Aristotle. And this I was not so much surprised at, namely, that that philosopher was not known to the rhetorician, inasmuch as he is not much known even to philosophers, except to a very few." Cicero, *The Treatise of M.T. Cicero on Topics*, trans. C.D. Yonge, 1.1. Cicero also became familiar with the master by chance, although he was dealing with only one work: "And such ignorance is the less excusable in them, because they not only ought to have been allured by those things which he has discovered and explained, but also by the incredible richness and sweetness of his eloquence," ibid.; cf. Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 1.

21   Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," 36.

elucidating what Aristotle had so perfectly presented.[22] Commentators were required to know all of Aristotle's works; only in the context of the whole could they interpret the meaning of select passages. Andronicus himself instilled this belief in the commentators; he thought that Aristotle's views as a whole were coherent, and so to speak in modern language, they constituted a system.

At the moment when Neoplatonism began to first take root, a familiarity with the works of Plato became necessary in order to show the harmony between Aristotle's views and the views of his teacher.[23]

The main work upon which commentaries were first written, and upon which they were most often written, was not *tà metà tà physiká*, but the *Categories*. Andronicus of Rhodes analyzed them word for word, while Boethius of Sidon adopted a more complicated method: he first interpretatively paraphrased and then explained the respective works. This method was probably so profound and intelligent that it evoked the admiration of Simplicius, one of the most esteemed and influential commentators of the later ancient times. The commentaries of Aspasius also enjoyed great prestige. Unfortunately only his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* is extant; his commentaries on the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* have perished.

For a long time, Alexander of Aphrodisia was regarded as being the faithful and even ideal commentator on Aristotle's work. He directed a school in Athens in the late second and early third century CE. He wrote commentaries on most of Aristotle's works, including the *Metaphysics*; today, only his commentary on the first five books of the *Metaphysics* is regarded as authentic. Alexander of Aphrodisia's influence on later commentators was so great (even if they did not always agree with him) that they often referred to him not by name but as 'the commentator' (*ho exêgêtês*).[24] He enjoyed the respect of Plotinus, Simplicius, and later the Arabic philosophers, particularly Averroes. Themistius (fourth century CE), who worked to represent faithfully Aristotle's views, is regarded as the last peripatetic commentator.

To sum up, the first phase of writing commentaries was an attempt to interpret Aristotle's views in the light of his entire philosophy, not for purely historical reasons, but because his philosophy was regarded as true. The second phase was already beginning in the third century CE, when Neoplatonism started to dominate commentaries on Aristotle. During the second phase,

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22   Aristot., *DA* 2, 5–9; cf. Falcon, "Commentators on Aristotle."

23   Henry J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 32.

24   Although Simplicius was a Neoplatonist, he regarded Alexander as the most faithful commentator on Aristotle; ibid., 14–15.

which was entirely different from the first, commentators did not intend to faithfully interpret and explain Aristotle's thought but, first, to show the unity of Greek philosophy as a whole, and second, to show that there was agreement between Aristotle and Plato, or to be more precise, that Aristotle was a loyal student of Plato. Plato was regarded as holding the highest position amongst the ancient philosophers. He was regarded also as a commentator, but in this case, not a commentator on philosophical works, but on reality itself.[25] Such an attitude and disposition of wanting to unify Plato and Aristotle's respective philosophies had appeared earlier, because in the second century CE, during Middle Platonism, Aristotle's views in logic were simply regarded as the views of Plato himself.[26]

Among the commentators in the second phase, we may mention Porphyry, Dexippus, Syrianus, Ammonius, Asclepius, Simplicius, Olymiodorus, John Philoponus, Elias, and David, among whom Simplicius was foremost.[27]

Porphyry is considered the author of a treatise in seven books, the title of which speaks for itself: *On the School of Plato and Aristotle as One*.[28] The fact that a student of Plotinus, who enjoyed very great prestige would present things this way, is certainly indicative that Aristotle was considered as being amongst the Neoplatonists and consequently, determined in what manner his works would be interpreted. This required much ingenuity because Plotinus himself criticized Aristotle's *Categories*.[29] Moreover, in its most important

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25   Simplicius, *In de Caelo* 131, 1. We should keep in mind here that the Neoplatonic commentators did not think of themselves as Neoplatonists, since the term 'Neoplatonism' did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century. For them, Plato was the philosopher above all others because he interpreted reality; hence, the measure of the value of every philosophy was its agreement with Plato's views. This applied both to Aristotle and to Plotinus; cf. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity*, 15, 24–25.

26   Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," 35.

27   Simplicius presented a collection of ten questions that a commentator must find answers to: (1) How and why did the names of philosophical schools appear? (2) What is the arrangement of the Aristotelian treatises? (3) Which treatise should we regard as the first one? (4) What is the purpose of Aristotle's philosophy? (5) What leads to this end? (6) How should we interpret Aristotle's arguments? (7) Why does he use vague (*asapheian*) expressions? (8) How should his arguments be interpreted? (9) What sort of reader or listener is being addressed? (10) How many divisions should be expected in each of the Aristotelian treatises, of what sort, and on what basis? Clearly, a commentary written in this way was the fruit of a high literary and philosophical culture; cf. ibid., 42–43.

28   The only extant fragments are in an Arabic translation; cf. Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 2.

29   Dexippus's second and third books of commentary on the *Categories* were devoted to answering to the objections of Plotinus. There, he drew on the commentaries of his

points, Aristotle's philosophy was diametrically opposed to Plato's philosophy. What could result from such a marriage? The result was that one of the two philosophers would be regarded as preeminent, and that philosopher was Plato. Aristotle was made to adapt to Plato and to Plotinus. The Aristotelian criticism of Platonism, so strong in many works, was watered down. Aristotle's metaphysics was Platonized, even in its most perfect version, which belonged to Plotinus. Plotinus in appearance only had made a synthesis of the views of both Greek masters.

In reconciling Aristotle with Plato, two arguments were chiefly used. We may find these arguments in the commentaries of Simplicius. In the first argument, it was thought that when Aristotle criticized Plato, he had those who misunderstood Plato in mind, and so, there was really no difference between them. In the second argument, the difference in their positions was merely verbal; that is, the same thought was simply formulated in different ways.[30] As an example, we can see how Porphyry had fit Aristotle's metaphysics into Plotinus's system. With complete conviction, he said that the Aristotelian conception of substance would necessarily lead to the acceptance of the One; the One, which is not a substance, though nevertheless, is the principle of all substances.[31] Nothing could be further from Aristotle, yet this was regarded as being in agreement with his views.[32]

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predecessors Porphyry and Iamblichus. When Plotinus claimed that Aristotle had made a mistake by accepting one genus for all substances (material and immaterial substances), Dexippus answered that the *Categories* was written with a beginner in philosophy in mind, one who would understand defined words, but not beings. Plotinus himself presented a metaphysical solution to the problem of plurality and unity of substances by referring to the Aristotelian conception of analogy (later called the analogy of attribution). Plotinus thought that the concept of substance belonged to something in the first meaning from which the rest comes, and in this case, this would be the intelligible substance. Here it would be easy to move from Aristotle's metaphysics to Plotinus's philosophy; cf. Pierre Hadot, "The Harmony of Plotinus and Aristotle According to Porphyry," in Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed*, 125–128.

30   Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity*, 26.

31   "In Porphyry's eyes, the Aristotelian doctrine of ουσία (true substance) presupposes and ultimately entails the Plotinian One"; ibid., 134.

32   For Aristotle, substance alone was the highest category of being, and so there is no primeval principle above substance, nor was there anything supra-entitative above being. The being that substances draw from the first substance is based not on emanation but on movement, for which the first substance is the end-purpose, be that direct (the first intelligences) or indirect (the sublunary world) movement. Aristotle discusses these questions in Book XII of the *Metaphysics*.

Another abuse in interpretation concerns Aristotle's views on the role of the Good in maintaining the order and unity of the cosmos. Porphyry thought that all substances participate in the divine Good as in their principle purpose, with the result that the whole takes the form of an ordered system.[33] This was an 'improvement' of Aristotle's system. For Aristotle, the link between the cosmos and God was based, metaphysically speaking, on the weakest type of causality, namely final causality, and final causality alone.[34] Finally, the Aristotelian *pros hen* (meaning in reference to one, or, *eph'henos*, meaning one thing) analogy, later called the analogy of attribution, was interpreted in the spirit of emanationism as a departure from the One and a return to the One.[35] The analogy of attribution was substituted by the Neoplatonic *way up and down* (πρόοδος καί ἐπιστροφή). Meanwhile, the Aristotelian analogy of attribution shows the relation between categories that already exist and does not describe the ontological origin of accidents from substances. Although the categories are secondary, they cannot be reduced to substance.[36]

While discussion at the level of the interpretation of Aristotle's writings provided an occasion for verifying the statements by appealing to source texts, another procedure took the form of a sort of manipulation. Aristotle was treated as the author of works of a purely Neoplatonic character that he did not write at all. This may be said first of all of *Aristotle's Theology* (in fact a selection from Plotinus's *Enneads*) and the *Book of Causes* (probably written by Proclus).

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33   Hadot, "The Harmony of Plotinus and Aristotle according to Porphyry," 135.

34   Aristotle accepted as an evident fact that the world was eternal; hence, the main problem was change or motion, not the coming-into-being and existence of being generally. Final causality, which is most important in the order of change, is the weakest kind in the ontological sense. He gave up the idea of treating God as the efficient cause, since in light of his *Physics*, an efficient cause can only operate by direct contact. This meant that God would be material. To sum up, at the level of the *Physics*, there is no solution as to what sort of nature the agent of motion possesses, while in the *Metaphysics* (bk. L) the entire strength of the argumentation is directed to the First Unmoved Mover as the final cause.

35   Hadot, "The Harmony of Plotinus and Aristotle according to Porphyry," 136.

36   From the logical point of view, they can be treated as being of equal importance, for they are different, even if from the metaphysical point of view, they are not of equal weight, as substance is the main category. However, if one sets aside the *Metaphysics*, and draws metaphysical conclusions instead from a logical interpretation of the *Categories*, the result will be a Platonization of Aristotle. This happened in the case of many philosophers of late antiquity and the Middle Ages (such as Gilbert de la Porrée); cf. É. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej w wiekach średnich* [History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages], (Warszawa: PAX, 1966), 141. Finally, in recent times as well, when logic is becoming first philosophy, metaphysics as second philosophy would be a variety of Platonism, and so it would be de facto ontology.

These works came from definitely Neoplatonist circles and expressed Neoplatonic philosophy. When they began to function as works of Aristotle, it is not surprising that Neoplatonism gained more support from Aristotle's followers.

A noteworthy consequence of mismatching the idealism of Plato and the realism of Aristotle was the structure of a typical philosophy curriculum, which was arranged as follows: logic, ethics, politics, physics, and theology. There was no longer room for metaphysics as the theory of being; metaphysics was absorbed by theology. Logic, which for Aristotle was only a tool of knowledge, was included among the sciences. The domination of theology may be understood in the context of Neoplatonism. For Neoplatonism, the most important object of human appetite (but not of human cognition) was the One, from which came the hypostasis of Intellect and Being. Although the concept of the One would be considered later in fields outside of philosophy, nevertheless, this would not consequently pose a great problem for the successors of Plotinus (emanation was a solution). The place of philosophy, or more precisely metaphysics, would be supplanted by speculations on 'after-worlds,' in which mythology, astrology, and magic came together (Iamblichus, Proclus).[37]

Why did the Neoplatonists ascribe a special role to the *Categories* from among all of Aristotle's works? They regarded the work as an introduction to the study of Plato's philosophy. The categories are literally predicates that point to ten fundamental modes of being, including first substance (which as first cannot be a predicate in the strict sense, but only a subject). The predicates as names at the level of concepts (that is, at the level of the meaning of names) may not only refer to concrete reality, which is intellectually a more difficult procedure, but also they could be transferred to the level of the ideas, which intellectually is a much easier operation. Ideas, after all, are objectified concepts where the meanings of names are identical to ideas, while concrete material beings are much richer in content than are concepts, which are always some sort of simplified image of reality. In effect, at the purely intellectual level, human reason moves more freely among concept-ideas than among concept-aspects that have reference to concrete material beings apprehended not only by the intellect, but also by the senses.

To sum up, the Aristotelian *Categories*, which were intended to refer to the reality of the world around us, became a springboard for Platonism, and the categories of being were changed into category-ideas. Aristotle intended to be useful by the presenting of Platonic philosophy from the point of view of logic

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37   I have written more extensively on this in *Człowiek i nauka: Studium z filozofii kultury* [Man and Science: The Study of Philosophy of Culture] (Lublin: Polish Society of Thomas Aquinas, 2008), pt. 2, Chap. 2.

and language, but his theory of being was overlooked because it had been re-placed by Plato's ideas, because Aristotle's categories, considered at the level of language qua an instrument of cognition, direct our thought toward material beings. Contrarily, where the categories were Platonized, they were directed away from the order of concepts to the order of Ideas. By the same token, Aristotle's logical works served as an introduction to Plato's philosophy and theory of Ideas, not as an introduction to the *Metaphysics*.

Is it not strange then that the culmination of an education in philosophy was not Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but the Platonic dialogues, for instance the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*? These works take up ontological issues (the concept of being), cosmological issues (the origin of the universe), and theological issues (the nature of the Supreme Being and the first cause). Philosophy is cultivated on the frontier between epistemology and linguistic speculations, while cosmology and theology draw from both philosophy and mythology. Plato had the final say in philosophy and the program of education, not Aristotle, from whose legacy the works on logic and theory of language were primarily expounded upon. Porphyry also asserted that the *Categories* does not concern beings, but concerns names and their meanings.[38] Meanwhile, for Aristotle the fundamental reference point for the *Categories* was being.[39]

The majority of Neoplatonists subordinated the thought of Aristotle to Plato; they foisted on Aristotle views that he never taught. Ammonius, a student of Proclus, thought that Aristotle was a follower of the theory of ideas (ideas existing in God's mind), and that God played the role of an efficient cause (and not merely a final cause).[40] Ammonius's view later influenced Al Farabi, who wrote *On the Harmony between Plato and Aristotle*. Simplicius had also expressed such a view earlier. As we have already noted, he was one of the most important Neoplatonic authorities among the commentators.[41] Porphyry

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38   Therefore, the problem of the definition of 'five words' (genus, species, difference, property, accidental feature) rather than an analysis of states of being came to the center stage. Porphyry, *Isagoge* 6.

39   "There are several senses in which a thing may be said to be, as we pointed out previously in our book on the various senses of words; for in one sense it means what a thing is or a 'this,' and in another sense it means that a thing is of a certain quality or quantity or has some such predicate asserted of it." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W.D. Ross, 7.1, 1028a 10–11; this is the updated translation found in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2., ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. W.D. Ross. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). Aristotle here mentions examples of the categories (substance, quality, quantity) as modes of being.

40   Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 3.

41   Ibid., 4.

and Iamblichus commented only on Book XII (L) of the *Metaphysics*. In turn, Syrianus, the teacher of Proclus, was probably the first Neoplatonist who made a detailed analysis of Aristotle's entire *Metaphysics*, although only his commentaries on Books B-G, and M-N have been preserved. Syrianus intended to defend Plato against Aristotle's attacks, but in turn he drew on the description of Plato's 'unwritten views' as presented by Aristotle himself.[42]

The phase of Neoplatonic commentaries moved from Aristotle's metaphysics to Plato's idealism and the emanationism of Plotinus. The commentaries were thus a far advanced interpretation with respect to taking philosophy as a whole, as unity. They regarded Neoplatonism as predominant over Aristotelianism.

Why did this happen? Why were the Greek commentators inclined to reinterpret Aristotle's thought, and why did the Neoplatonic commentaries make Aristotle subordinate to Plato? We may propose the following answer: the Greek commentators were primarily exegetes who did not have a philosophy of their own. The texts of Aristotle, which they had been discovered and published, were so difficult and extensive that it would have been an immense undertaking to reconstruct his views in light of the whole. The Neoplatonists, on the other hand, did have a philosophy of their own. That philosophy was ultimately understood in terms other than those of theoretical knowledge: the purpose of philosophy as the Neoplatonists saw it was to reach the first cause and to be united with the Deity. For this reason, Aristotle's philosophy, which was becoming increasingly well known because of the Greek commentaries, could be incorporated in some way into a certain stage in the Neoplatonist road to the One. In the emanation-based system of Plotinus, it was not a matter of reconciling Aristotle with Plato, but of demonstrating their complementary roles. This philosophy included a way down (*proodos*) from, as well as a way up (*epistrophé*), or return to the One. Only elect philosophers could make the full return.

The rich and elastic schema of the emanation-based vision of being allowed for an eclectic treatment of previous philosophy, because in practical terms, the views of each thinker could find a place for itself in the schema—not in the schema considered as a whole, since currents or philosophical systems taken in themselves could differ widely, but rather as parts of the greater and higher whole that Plotinus presented. Thus, a distinction must be made between the problem of a reconciliation of the views of Plato and Aristotle in the order of their philosophical systems, and the complementary adaptation of their views to yet another super-system, the philosophy of Plotinus. Plotinus's

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42   D'Ancona Costa, "Commenting on Aristotle," 208.

philosophical system, in turn, was subordinated to religion by certain very in-fluential successors (Proclus or Iamblichus). As a result, the interpretation of certain philosophical texts and commentary acquired the status of 'handmaid-en of theology' (*ancilla theologiae*).[43] The study of Aristotle was regarded as a special initiation of a lower degree, and the study of Plato was regarded as an initiation of a higher degree.[44]

After Alexandria was conquered by the Arabs in 641 CE, the great tradition of practicing philosophy as a way of life and writing commentaries was broken.[45] After some time (beginning in the ninth century), the Arabs started to assimi-late the legacy of Greek culture and started the third phase of the writing of commentaries. The interruption had not been total, because outside of Alex-andria and Athens, the Syrians were very active. The Syrians translated Greek works, including those written by Aristotle, as well as other already existing commentaries into the Syriac language. Since Arabic became the language of science after the fall of Christianity and the domination of Islam in the lands of Asia, Syrian scholars then began to translate the Greek works, which had been translated into Syriac, into Arabic.[46]

It is uncertain whether the Syrians wrote their own commentaries, but we do know that a Syrian monk, named John of Euphemia, was the author of the *Theology of Aristotle*, a work that was regarded for a long time as an original work of the Stagyrite.[47] That work had great influence during the Middle Ages. Its intention was not primarily to reconcile Plato with Aristotle, but to recon-cile Plotinus with Aristotle, and to do so in such a way that excerpts from the *Enneads* (Books IV–VI) could be made to agree with the name and authority

43   Otto Zwierlein, "'Interpretation' in Antike und Mittelalter" ['Interpretation' in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages], in Geerlings and Schulze, *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelal-ter*, 89.

44   Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," 41n32.

45   Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity*, 51.

46   Gilson, *Historia*, 181. The number of translations into Arabic was very high. It was thought that a translator should have high qualifications. According to Al-Jahiz, a translator should possess the same level of knowledge as the author whom he is translating, he should have perfect knowledge of the language of the work he is translating, and his native language, while at the same time he should be aware that between the two languages there is never a perfect identity; the languages could have a negative influence on each other with re-spect to vocabulary or syntax. The translation of religious and theological texts entailed special difficulties; manuscripts needed to be provided in undamaged condition; cf. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe* [Transmis-sion of Greek Philosophy into the Arab World] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1968), 21–25.

47   Gilson, *Historia*, 619.

of Aristotle. This is an example of a very advanced manipulation, by which it would be hard for an ignorant reader to realize that what they were reading was not authored by Aristotle himself, since these were not paraphrases but entire books drawn from another philosopher. This manipulation had far reaching effects for the later history of philosophy. It gave the clear advantage to Neoplatonism as it contained all the authorities (Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus).

This is also readily apparent in the attitude of the Arabic commentators. While they did not take a position against the views of Plato, Aristotle, or Plotinus, in reality they had to favor Platonism and Neoplatonism.[48] The winner was Neoplatonism, both with regard to the interpretation of Aristotle's views and as to how philosophy as a whole was understood. Neoplatonism most of all set the tone for how the Arabs received Greek philosophy, especially since the influence of two strong Neoplatonic schools met in Baghdad, the one school being from Alexandria (which the Arabs had conquered in 642), and the other from Harran.

In the first half of the tenth century, Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus, a Nestorian, and a translator and commentator of Aristotle's works, was the central philosophical figure in Baghdad. The commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisia, Themistius, and Olympiodorus were translated into Arabic.[49] The *Categories*, together with Porphyry's *Isagoge* (Introduction to the *Categories*), continued to be used as an introduction to philosophy, which even more strongly determined how philosophy was subordinated to Neoplatonism. The *Isagoge* preceded the *Categories* education programs. Syrian and Arabic translations of commentators such as Porphyry, Stephen of Alexandria, Allinus, John Philoponus, Ammonius, Themistius, Theophrastus, and Simplicius were read, as well as Aristotle's *Hermeneutics*, together with the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisia, John Philoponus, Iamblichus, and Porphyry, Galen, Themistius, and the abbreviations of Stephen.

As for the *Metaphysics*, the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisia and Themistius were read, but only on Book Lambda, and the commentary of Syrianus on Book Beta. We know that the Arabs were familiar with these commentaries, although not all had been translated into Arabic.[50]

One way or another, the context of the assimilation of Aristotle's philosophy by the Arabs was definitely Neoplatonic, and this defined the framework in which philosophy was practiced.[51]

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48   Ibid., 182.

49   D'Ancona Costa, "Commenting on Aristotle," 233.

50   Ibid., 242.

51   Ibid., 227–229.

The fourth phase was that of Christian Latin commentaries.[52] Latin commentaries, whether on poetical works, in particular Virgil's, or philosophical works, such as Cicero's or Lucretius's, had been appearing in Rome. The Christian commentaries, including commentaries on philosophical works, began with Boethius. Boethius planned to translate all the works of Aristotle and Plato into Latin and to write commentaries on each work.[53] His untimely and tragic death cut his plan short, but he did translate almost all of Aristotle's works on logic, as well as the *Physics*, adding commentaries on entire works or certain passages.[54] Boethius's translations were made with a spirit of great piety fostered by his high level of literary culture.[55]

Boethius did not take the first Greek commentators as his example, but was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism. He attempted to reconcile the thought of Plato and Aristotle, respectively, with Neoplatonism, and so too, paganism with Christianity. In the second of his two commentaries on the *Hermeneutics* (79, 9–80, 1), he admitted that he wanted to show the harmony between the views of Plato and Aristotle.[56] As a result, due to his pioneering work in translating philosophical texts into Latin, the Neoplatonist way of understanding philosophy reached Christianity not only among philosophers but also among theologians.[57] This brand of Neoplatonism, resting on the authority of Boethius, began to seem like an integral part of Christianity, a view to which many philosophers and theologians easily succumbed. Nonetheless, Boethius's translations were not the only way whereby Neoplatonism permeated Western Christianity.

Shortly after the death of Boethius, the Western Roman Empire fell apart, resulting in an interruption in the continuity of classical culture, including philosophy, for some centuries. The first renaissance was due to Charlemagne,

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52   As for Byzantium, we may speak of a certain interest in Aristotle in the eleventh and twelfth century due to Psellos, when there was the 'Byzantine Renaissance.' Michael of Ephesus, Eustratius, and Sophonias wrote commentaries; cf. Praechter, "Review of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," 36–37.

53   Sten Ebbesen, "Boethius as an Aristotelian Commentator," in Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed*, 348–349.

54   Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 19.

55   "The translations of the basic texts are extremely faithful to the originals which are rendered word by word and morpheme by morpheme with a supreme contempt for normal Latin sentence structure. The choice of this procedure was very deliberate. Boethius was a consummate master of Latin prose, but he wanted his readers to see the real thing," Ebbesen, "Boethius as an Aristotelian Commentator," 375.

56   Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 14.

57   Ibid.

while the reactivation of philosophy, albeit philosophy strictly connected with theology, began among Irish monks who had migrated to France. John Scotus Eriugena was preeminent among them.[58] He translated the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis officio*, and some of Maximus the Confessor's commentaries from Greek to Latin. Eriugena, for his own part, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John and on Pseudo-Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*.[59] Because of the authors who were translated and commented upon, Eriugena was also influenced by Neoplatonism, which had begun to permeate Christianity through theological and philosophical works.

A real renaissance occurred during the twelfth century, when a great project was undertaken to translate Greek works into Latin, both from Greek and from Arabic. The first Greek translator was Jacob of Venice (circa 1130 CE) who went to Byzantium and translated some of Aristotle's works. Gerard of Cremona translated these works from Arabic in the mid-twelfth century (*Posterior Analytics* with the commentary by Themistius, *De naturali auditu*, *De coelo et mundo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Meteorology*). He also translated the works of Alexander of Aphrodisia and the very influential *Book of Causes*. Toledo was the main centre for the translation of Greek and Arabic works into Latin. In Toledo, they began to translate Aristotle from the original Greek texts, and Henry Aristippus made enormous contributions to this.[60] Of note, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was constantly absent from the translations, although they translated the *Metaphysics* of Avicenna and Algazel, and many other philosophical works, including some of Plato's dialogues (the most important of which was the *Timaeus*), the works of the Neoplatonists, Pseudo-Dionysius, Arabic authors, as well as Jewish authors.[61]

In the following century, the process of translation accelerated; the most important legacy of Greek and Arabic philosophy became available in Latin.[62] William of Moerbeke, who lived in the thirteenth century, translated Aristotle's

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58 We may only note that somewhat earlier, Fredegisus, a student and successor of Alcuin, had become interested in philosophy. He wrote two philosophical opuscula, in which he followed Plato in holding the eternal existence of matter and the pre-existence of souls; cf. Gilson, *Historia*, 111.

59 Ibid., 592.

60 Ibid., 233.

61 Ibid., 234.

62 Sorabji, "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle," 22. It is worth mentioning here that in Byzantium, commentaries appeared in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There was no problem regarding translation, because Greek was the official language of Byzantium. The works of Eustratius and Michael of Ephesus were among the most important commentaries. The commentators were under the tutelage of Princess Anna Comnena. She

complete works, including his *Metaphysics*.[63] However, it should emphasized that the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* appeared relatively late, so late in fact that it allowed others works, including commentaries on the *Metaphysics* to perpetuate an utterly non-Aristotelian and Neoplatonic image of philosophy.

Latin Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics

What was the intention of the Christian authors who commented on Aristotle? Did they approach their commentaries with any sort of philosophical or theological assumptions? Were they trying to 'Christianize' Aristotle as the Neoplatonists had tried to Platonize Aristotle? While the Christians indeed seemed to Christianize the Stagyrite as the Neoplatonists had Platonized him, such an analogy would be oversimplified. The positions of Neoplatonism and of Christianity with respect to *philosophy* were different.

In the case of Neoplatonism, we should consider two aspects. First, the Neoplatonists treated philosophy as a unity comprising the views of many authors, including Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus. The Neoplatonization of Aristotle in this case consisted in mitigating or neutralizing the Stagyrite's objections to Plato's teaching (especially Plato's theory of Ideas), and then in joining both philosophies to the system of Plotinus. From the systemic point of view, the philosophy of Plotinus was a more cohesive whole than the philosophies of his predecessors, both with respect to the status of the supreme principle, and the conception of how the entire cosmos came into being. There were elements in Plato that were only in a germinal stage. We do not know what the Idea of the Good was (whether a personal being or a deity), and the description of how the world began in the *Timaeus* was partly mythological. Aristotle's First Mover only beheld himself. The First Mover was accessible in cognition only to the first sphere of stars (which were intelligences), but the world did not come from them. In this case, the process of connecting Plato's philosophy with Aristotle's consisted in filling in the shortcomings of either one with the other. The most important advance was that God, who was a poor intellect according to Aristotle, possessed and had a knowledge of ideas as Plato insisted. Plotinus's vision, as we know, went even further. God who knows ideas was somehow a composite being (God plus the ideas that God possesses). For Plotinus, that

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took part in seminars they directed. Byzantine culture did not have great esteem for philosophy, hence it did not shine for any special achievements in that field.

63   Moerbeke also translated Neoplatonist commentaries from Greek into Latin; cf. David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 204–206.

which is supreme must be simple; and it must also be above being an intellect and the nature of any idea. Most importantly though, that which is simple, must be above being. From such a simple thing, namely God, comes the intellect that knows ideas together with being. But how does it come about? Here, Plotinus introduced an unusual solution, but one that united the cosmos as a whole: the way of emanation. The One emanates from itself the first hypostasis, which is Intellect together with ideas. The first hypostasis, and not the One, then brings forth the next hypostasis. Thus, in succession, emanation reaches the final term, which is matter. Later a return begins, an upward way to the One.

Over the centuries and in many civilizations, Plotinus's philosophy, particularly with respect to his theory of emanation, gained followers. Various philosophical currents could be adapted to it, just as the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics were joined to it. Moreover, the vision was open to various religions, which could find in it an intellectual underpinning (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Finally, it enabled philosophy to return to mythology. It took place among such well known Neoplatonists as Proclus and Iamblichus. In its beginnings, emanationism was inspired by solar religions, which probably suggested to Plotinus the idea of the emanation-based conception of being (radiating Sun as a metaphor for radiating One).[64] Moreover, at least some aspects of Neoplatonism were adopted by all of the above mentioned monotheistic religions, which otherwise opposed each other in matters of doctrine, although Plotinus, for his part, was definitely hostile to Christianity.

Just as the Neoplatonization of Aristotle was fostered by two inauthentic works published under his name (the *Book of Causes*, and the *Theology of Aristotle*), so the Neoplatonization of Christianity was fostered by the authority of Pseudo-Dionysius, who has been variously identified as a disciple of St. Paul, Dionysius from the Acts of the Apostles (17:34), or as the founder of the Abbey of St. Denis near Paris. In any case, it was a great Christian author whose views definitely had a Neoplatonic character, especially when expressed in such works as *On the Divine Names*, that were later often commented upon. Today, we know that the works of this enigmatic character were written in the fifth century and that the Neoplatonism evident in the works stemmed from their being based on the philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyry, and not because the author had been an inspired Christian.[65]

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64   For more on this topic, see my *Science in Culture*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

65   Gilson, *Historia*, 580.

Yet despite the strong attraction of Neoplatonism, not all Christian thinkers yielded to its intellectual charm. Instead, some Christian thinkers returned to the original texts of Aristotle, accordingly wherein there was no mention of emanation, and wherein the Divine Being only knew the being that was itself.

On the other hand, Aristotle could not be expected to present a philosophy that was in agreement with Christian beliefs because he had lived and wrote four centuries before Christ. Of course, Aristotle was a pagan and did not know Revelation or the Sacred Scriptures. He never came into contact with Jews, was born before Christ came into the world, and was not obliged to form a philosophy or theology to meet the needs of Christianity. Consequently, there was no any need to Christianize Aristotle by force. Hence, it was possible to consider from an intellectual distance the problem of how much his views were or were not in harmony with Revelation, and how useful they could be for cultivating theology.

Meanwhile, Neoplatonism approached philosophy in an almost religious manner, if not to say an ideological manner, and it 'Platonized' or 'Plotinusized' the Stagyrite's thought by force. The Christians had no need for such approaches because Aristotle's authority was not necessary to add credibility to their faith, but it could be necessary to understand the faith within certain bounds. The controversy over these bounds or limits was not only about the role of philosophy, but also about the autonomy of philosophy in human cognition and in theological cognition. It was not necessarily 'in the interest' of Christianity to Platonize or Christianize Aristotle, since, as a pagan, Aristotle had a right to be ignorant of Revelation. What was important was purely intellectual (truth-oriented) knowledge within the framework of human nature, missing the special grace necessary for the knowledge of revealed truths.

When the Neoplatonists made a religion of philosophy, then the philosophical authorities such as Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus had to stand in agreement. This was the occasion for a special stretching of their views. This was not necessary in the case of Christianity, because these philosophers were not authorities in matters of faith, and their philosophy as something human not only could be in disagreement with Revelation, but could quite simply err in the sphere accessible to human cognition. Hence, in many commentaries, Christian authors on the writings of Aristotle showed the conflicting views of various philosophies, and Aristotle's positions did not need to be taken as the last word. In this way, faith and Revelation could help in restoring a neutral and philosophical approach to the views of Aristotle. The intellectual skill that philosophy provided needed to be developed, skill in reading the truth about reality, for this, in turn, would help our understanding the contents of Revelation. These contents, although they had a supernatural source, were communicated

in human language based on analogies (most often metaphors) to the world around us. For this reason, it was important to understand the real world: in order to conceive of the supernatural in some measure. For just this reason, a philosophy was necessary that in a true way interpreted reality and did not supplant religion or theology.[66]

This is seen, for example, in the Latin commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, which focused primarily on explaining Aristotle's views, along with controversies and difficulties in interpretation. The personal views of the commentators could be stated in other works, whether strictly philosophical works, or theological works containing elements of philosophy. In those works also would be wider discussions on particular topics. A commentary on the *Metaphysics* would be more didactic than interpretative. It would be a sort of introduction to metaphysics for beginners.[67]

Thomas commented on twelve of Aristotle's works, including the *Metaphysics*, a commentary that contains relatively few of his own views. These commentaries may be crucial for metaphysics as metaphysics, but not so crucial for Aristotle's metaphysics. In the case of medieval commentaries, a new approach to the texts of Aristotle appeared. On the one hand, it was a matter of explaining what Aristotle had in mind; especially given that the metaphysics is a very difficult text to understand. On the other hand, metaphysics was treated as the science that seeks wisdom, and so seeks truth. Hence, the main purpose was not so much to provide a faithful interpretation as it was to understand reality. Moreover, over the centuries, there were new currents and philosophical positions that could no longer be crammed into the conception of a single philosophy, as happened at the end of the ancient period. Thomas also had the supernatural status of sacred doctrine (*sacra doctrina*) at stake, the supernatural status of which had to be preserved. It was different from the mythology of the Greeks, which in turn had influenced Aristotle's cosmological views expressed in his metaphysics.

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66   Cf. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Filozofia w teologii* [Philosophy in Theology] (Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1999).

67   Ioannes Isaac, "Saint Thomas interprète des oeuvres d'Aristotle" [Saint Thomas Interpreting the Works of Aristotle], *Scholastica ratione historico-critica instauranda, acta congressus scholastici internationalis, Romae, anno sancto 1950 celebrati* [Scholastics that Should be Restored by a Historical-Critical Method. Acts of the Scholastic International Congress] (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum antonianum, 1951), 356. Here, I am following Joseph Owens's "Aquinas as Aristotelian Commentator," in Thomas Aquinas, *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274–1974*, ed. A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 215.

For the sake of illustration, we may consider here some instances where Thomas intervened with his own position while commenting on Aristotle. In some instances, Thomas treated act and potency in the same way as unity and plurality, as a consequence of being (*ea quae consequuntur ens*), while Aristotle, in the same context, had not mentioned act and potency.[68] Thomas emphasized more strongly than did Aristotle *separatum*, that is, the transcendence of substances such as the divine substance and immaterial substances (angels). In the context of the controversy between Averroes and Avicenna, Thomas wanted to stress, following Avicenna, that being in general (*ens commune*) is the object of metaphysics, while the transcendent substances are its cause.[69] Moreover, in Thomas, the metaphysical conception of God is different from that which is presented in Aristotle, and it flows from another conception of being. For this reason, when Thomas accepted the term '*theologia*' for metaphysics, he was emphasizing in his commentary that it was permissible only when it apprehended God not in himself, but as a cause.[70]

To summarize, in order to emphasize the transcendence of God (and the angels), Thomas said that they are separate, not only as are the objects of mathematics (conceptually), but also separate in existence (*et non solum secundum rationem, sicut mathematica, sed etiam secundum esse, sicut Deus et intelligentiae*).[71] For Thomas as a theologian, transcendence was a crucial problem in establishing the limits of human cognition with respect to what is known by Revelation. He also emphasized an aspect of being that did not appear in Aristotle—existence (*esse*). Insofar as neither God nor the angels could exist in matter, then *ens commune* was described as being that can exist without matter. Here, in turn, Thomas entered into polemics with Avicenna, which was occasioned by the commentary on metaphysics, especially the introductory remarks on its object.[72] The next important intervention concerned the object of Divine cognition. Aristotle had said that God knew only himself, since nothing else was worthy of being an object of his knowledge, while Thomas remarked that God is the principle of all things, and He knows other things through knowing himself.[73] This position, of course, is definitely different from Aristotle's.

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68   Ibid., 217–218.

69   Ibid., 218.

70   Ibid., 219.

71   Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, pooemium.

72   Joseph Owens's "Aquinas as Aristotelian Commentator, 225.

73   Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, lib. XII, lect. 9, nr 2614–2615; cf. Joseph Owens "Aquinas as Aristotelian Commentator, 227.

Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, without ceasing to be a commentary, also looked at metaphysics as such as a science that seeks truth (and so, without regard to who was the author of metaphysics). However, this is kept to a minimum, since metaphysical questions and polemics are raised with greater freedom in other works such as *Contra Gentiles* and *De Veritate*. Hence, we must agree with Owens that from the quantitative point of view, Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is primarily a commentary.[74]

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74   "With the foregoing data from the survey of the commentary on the *Metaphysics*, one is in the position to formulate the questions about the kind of procedure the work involves. Quantitatively, the overwhelming percentage of the book confines itself to explanation of the Aristotelian text just as the text stands, with recourse to other Aristotelian treatises and to other writers for elucidation as the occasion demands.... Even with the strictly philosophical explanation, however, at times the judgments are made and the decisions are given on the strength of the Thomistic metaphysics of existence. These occasions are few comparatively, but they are concerned with philosophically important issues." Ibid., 228.

CHAPTER 4

The Autonomy of Metaphysics

Only in such a climate of different systems and commentaries could the problem arise of the status of metaphysics as metaphysics, and not in particular the metaphysics of Aristotle. Medieval commentators still respected the Stagyrite's privileged role in the origin of metaphysics, but they felt freer in defining their own positions. This freedom was not usually expressed in commentaries, but in opuscula on particular problems in metaphysics, or in works in other domains in which metaphysical topics were discussed, and especially in theological works. Only when Aristotle's metaphysics became available to the Latin world did the term 'metaphysics' begin to designate not only Aristotle's treatise, *tà metà tà physiká*, but also an autonomous domain of philosophy. Linguistically, the concept was more easily conveyed in Latin after it received a single-word designation (*metaphysica* as opposed to *tà metà tà physiká*), since the meaning of phrases consisting of a series of short Greek words is often lost in translation to Latin. On the other hand, it marked a new freedom from the ballast of Neoplatonist influences that by force, as it were, had subordinated Aristotle to Plato and to Plotinus in the name of one philosophy. The awareness of a new image of the world and God in Christianity meant that the views of Greek philosophy could be studied from a certain distance, and thereby, these views could be seen as historically varied. On the other hand, the disciplines they formed took on some degree of autonomy.

Aristotle was given a special role here because he had subjected science to specific rigorous methodological demands with respect to the end, object, and method of science. Hence, his works were scientific treatises devoted to separate sciences. This was also true of philosophy; within philosophy, he separated disciplines of philosophy. Since philosophy was first understood more generally as knowledge, the types of philosophy were treated as distinct with regard to their object and purpose. In this way, there arose practical philosophy (morality), 'poietic' philosophy (production), and theoretical philosophy (knowledge for the sake of knowledge). Theoretical philosophy was divided into physics as the philosophy of nature, called second philosophy; into mathematics as the philosophy of quantity; and finally, into first philosophy, which deserved the name of wisdom to the highest degree. After three centuries, first philosophy became metaphysics after Aristotle's legacy had been recovered.

In the Stoics' division of philosophy, various criteria were mixed, since they supposed that philosophy was made up of ethics, physics, and logic. Ethics had

a practical character, physics a theoretical character, and logic had an instrumental and formal character. Although ethics had a practical character, the Stoics referred to it as first philosophy, since it was the most important. There was no place for metaphysics at all, since, as Aristotle had explained, if there were no substances except material ones, then physics would be first philosophy.[1] The Stoics treated physics as second philosophy because it was subordinate to ethics; however, as a theoretical science, it was considered to be first.

In the case of Neoplatonism, especially that of Plotinus, the status of first philosophy was problematic. Plotinus turned to Platonic terminology. For him, the most noble part of philosophy was dialectic, and he thought that dialectics is not merely a tool for the philosopher.[2]

It is worthy to note that the term '*metaphysica*' did not appear in the *Enneads*.[3] For Plotinus, philosophy was primarily dialectic, not metaphysics. By the same token, Plotinus's and Aristotle's conceptions of philosophy failed to concur. Consequently, we can ask whether the nature of metaphysics is viewed in the same way by Plotinus and Aristotle respectively, since first philosophy for each of them meant different things. For Plotinus, dialectic was the most important philosophy, and for Aristotle the most important philosophy was the science concerning being qua being.

The return of metaphysics as a science, and as the first science, was due not to the Greek commentators, but to the medieval commentators, especially the Latin commentators who, on the one hand, were able to 'de-Neoplatonize' Aristotle. The Latin commentators had at their disposal Revelation; they did not have to treat metaphysics primarily as theology, but could retain the special status of metaphysics as knowledge gained by a natural path, while at the same time, retaining the object of metaphysics, which is being, and not separated substances. The medieval commentaries are helpful in situating metaphysics qua metaphysics, and not merely the metaphysics of a particular author such as Aristotle. Although the questions belonging to metaphysics were raised in different works, the fourteen books left by Aristotle methodologically defined the status of this field of knowledge as a separate science. However, a science is not the sole property of its author, since its purpose is to ascertain truth, and so, the purpose of science as thus conceived is not to make one author fit

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1 "Now, if there were no other substance except for those produced by nature, then physics would be the first knowledge," Aristot., *Met.* 6.1, 1025b 28–29.

2 Plotinus, *Enneades* 1.3[5].

3 We should take note here of an excess of zeal in the English translation of the *Enneades*, in which the term 'metaphysician' appears where Plotinus used the word 'philosopher'; cf. ibid., 1.3[3] and [5].

artificially with another (for example, Aristotle to Plato), but to seek among all authors what is true, including openness to new approaches. This is most visibly implemented in the works of Thomas Aquinas.

In the Latin Middle Ages, the ground was prepared for the emergence of metaphysics qua metaphysics. While metaphysics owed much to Aristotle, it was not merely a commentary on Aristotle. It did not need to surrender to a vision of one philosophy that was common to all philosophers. It could help theology without replacing it to become philosophical religion. In the Middle Ages, a new conception of being and a new conception of God took shape. This helped to define the status of metaphysics as an autonomous domain of philosophy, whether in relation to the texts of Aristotle and commentaries, or in relation to revealed theology, which theological positions metaphysics did not need to prove.

Basically, the way that led to the autonomy of metaphysics was rather complicated. As long as metaphysics was reduced to being a commentary on the fourteen books by Aristotle, it was still *tà metà tà physiká*. When new conceptions of being were brought into contact with the thought of Aristotle (and as attempts to stretch Aristotle to the views of a commentator), metaphysics became something more than a mere commentary. Although in the Middle Ages, a work was never written that bore the name of 'Metaphysics,' if we collect positions scattered throughout various works and by various authors and the arguments in them, we can say that they comprise a metaphysics that can be clearly ascribed to one author or another. Hence, we speak of the metaphysics of Scotus, or of the metaphysics of Thomas.

Certainly, this milestone could happen when the epoch of Greek and Neoplatonic commentaries ended and when, in the ninth century, the Arabs began to take up philosophy, which drew on the wealth of commentaries, and dared to write independent treatises. This allowed for the formation of new conceptions of being. The discovery of existence as different from essence should be regarded as the most important of these new conceptions. Although various positions appeared here among both Arabic and Latin philosophers, metaphysics acquired its own subjectivity. The discussion returned concerning what was the object of metaphysics and how being should be understood; this was the most important object of speculation for metaphysics as an autonomous domain.

Ontology in the Middle Ages

In philosophical literature, especially in works on the history of philosophy, the word 'ontology' sometimes appears to designate the views of certain authors or trends in ancient times or the Middle Ages. The work of Albert Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?* (Ontology or Metaphysics?), may serve as an example of the better known works; in it the author situated the dispute in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries on the object of metaphysics on the plane of a dispute between ontology and metaphysics, although he did remark that the word ontology had a later origin.[1] Thus, such an approach would seem common enough, and it is not at all an exception. Many philosophical '-isms' such as 'humanism' or 'Neoplatonism' mentioned above did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[2]

In the case of ontology, the problem is unique. Of course, to show that the word 'ontology' is not suited to describe any of the medieval philosophical currents, we must first know the meaning of the word and the reasons why it was introduced as a philosophical neologism. To do that, we need to analyze the context in which ontology as ontology arose. That topic will be considered further in Part 2 of this book. At this point, it would be worth investigating in what sense the word ontology has been used by those who study ancient and medieval philosophy.

When we go into Zimmermann's work mentioned above, the answer turns out to be relatively simple. The context of the answer is the controversy over the object of Aristotle's metaphysics, of which at least one of the positions may be called ontology. For, if among the options presented by Aristotle some choose the one that says that God is the object of metaphysics, then metaphysics becomes theology, as it were; whereas, if others choose or consider being to be the object of metaphysics, then metaphysics turns out to be nothing more than ontology. *Theos* means God, and *ontos* means being. But this solution is too simple to be true, since the controversy continues to this day. Ontology, when formally established, will not have—as we will see in Part 2—being as its object.

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1 Albert Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?* [Ontology or Metaphysics], 2nd ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).
2 The author who coined the term 'humanism' (*humanismus*) was Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer. The word 'Neoplatonism' also is from the first half of the nineteenth century.

For Aristotle, theology is not a particular science about one of the many beings, because it is at the same time the science concerning being qua being, and it has a universal dimension.[3] On the other hand, the science concerning being qua being is essentially directed toward God, and so it contains elements of theology.[4]

Various propositions for solutions revolve around how to explain this and which solution should be accepted as superior. In any case, the definition of ontology given by Zimmermann, who appeals in a rather vague way to the way ontology is understood today, seems unsatisfactory. Zimmermann says that ontology, "is a science that does not investigate only a segment of being, but being in general."[5] Keeping in view this understanding of ontology, he presents some very interesting material with a selection of passages from different commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in which various solutions are presented concerning the object of the book. Is ontology really to be found among these? We cannot stop at the formulation 'the science concerning being in general' without exploring how being qua being is understood, and especially whether being contains God.

On the other hand, what would the opposition of ontology to metaphysics mean in the context of medieval philosophy? The second word (metaphysics), although it arose earlier than ontology, did not come from Aristotle and the circumstances in which it was introduced are not completely clear, which makes it difficult for us to present exactly its initial meaning. The word 'metaphysics' has been interpreted in several ways, but even if it is interpreted according to objective criteria by demonstrating what is 'above' the world (*metaphysica* as *transphysica*), it would still keep its universal dimension. In view of this, we can ask, is the opposition that Zimmerman suggests adequate at the level of

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3 "Hence, there will be three speculative philosophies: mathematics, physics, and theology—.... One might indeed raise the question whether the primary philosophy is universal or deals with someone genus or entity; ... but if there is a substance which is immutable, the science which studies this will be prior to physics, and will be primary philosophy, and universal in this sense, that it is primary." Aristot., *Met.* 6.1 1026a 18–32.

4 It happens in two ways: either, being is divided into categories, substance is the first among the categories, and the divine substance is the highest of substances, or, being is known by knowing causes, and God is the cause. For this reason, whether as an object or as a cause, God is included in the inquiries of the science that concerns being qua being.

5 "*Metaphysik ist also—in der heute geläufigen Terminologie ausgedrückt—Ontologie, d.h. die Wissenschaft die nicht irgendeinen Ausschnit des Seienden erforscht, sondern das Seiende im allgemeinen*" (Metaphysics is thus—in the now familiar terminology used—ontology; i.e., science that explores not any segment of beings, but being in general); Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 415.

Aristotle's position and at the level of the positions held later by the medieval commentators? It seems not.

Zimmerman divides the positions: God is one of the objects of metaphysics (*Gott ist eines von mehreren Subjekten der Metaphysik*), God is the cause of the object of metaphysics (*Gott ist Ursache des Subjekts der Metaphysik*), God is part of the object of metaphysics (*Gott ist Teil der Subjekts der Metaphysik*).[6] There is no opposition here between metaphysics (theology) and ontology, but the scope of the inclusion of God in the area of metaphysical inquiries is considered. It is clear that despite their differences, metaphysics is not a particular theology, nor pure ontology; it is the science concerning being, since, in the framework of being, God is either directly expressed, or is apprehended as the cause of being, and in either case, God is essentially connected with the object of metaphysics.

Why was the place of God so strongly emphasized in medieval metaphysics? Was this because religious concerns came into play, and philosophy (metaphysics) was supposed to be only the handmaiden of theology? This would be a great simplification, and, indeed, such a view was introduced during the Reformation as an objection of the camp of the so-called papists in the context of the religious wars.[7] It is evident that God appears in Aristotle's metaphysics for purely philosophical reasons, not for religious reasons. God is the reason that explains the motion of the entire cosmos; this motion in the Greek perspective had not only a physical dimension, but also had a metaphysical dimension, because it was the reason for being. At the same time, this God was recognized as the highest manifestation of being, since God is the highest substance (*ουσία*).[8] And so, it was not religious, but rather purely philosophical concerns that caused God to be included in metaphysical inquiries. Medieval metaphysics differed in many respects from Aristotle's metaphysics. In medieval metaphysics, another conception of God and God's place in metaphysics also appeared.

How does the polarization of positions appear to Zimmermann?

(1) God is one of the objects of metaphysics. This position was shared by Roger Bacon, Gottfried of Aspall, Giles of Rome, later Peter Aureole, William of Ockham, and John Buridan. (2) God is the cause of the object of metaphysics. This was the opinion of Albert the Great, Richard Rufus of Cornwall, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Marchia, Richard of Clive. (3) God is a part of the object

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6 Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, vi–vii.

7 The anti-Catholic propaganda that was present during the Reformation was later used by Russian Communists in their battle against the Church and the so-called dark Middle Ages. I wrote on this in my book *Człowiek i nauka*, 104–105.

8 Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 455–456.

of metaphysics. This was the opinion of Robert Kilwardby, Siger of Brabant, Henry of Ghent, and later Augustine Triumpus of Ancona, Peter of Alvern, John Quidort of Paris, Alexander of Alexandria, John Duns Scotus, Anthony Andreas.

If God is one of the objects of metaphysics, then why is God such an object, and what are the other objects? The answer to these questions will allow us to learn why it is difficult to speak of ontology in the Middle Ages. Roger Bacon explained that we can point to three objects of metaphysics, which ultimately are subordinated to one of these objects. These are being qua being, substance, and the highest source and end from which everything comes and to which everything returns. The unity of the object of metaphysics is based on the subordination of all objects to the First Cause.[9] And thus, even if we are speaking of three objects of metaphysics, this science constitutes a unity, because the objects are connected causally, and they are subordinated to the one cause that is God. In such a case, God is at the same time the object of metaphysics and the cause of the unity of the object of metaphysics when this object is split into three objects. The causal connections between the objects of metaphysics plays an essential role in showing the unity of metaphysics as a science. Giles of Rome, who shared Roger Bacon's position, emphasized that if we speak of being as such, which is the object of metaphysics, then God also is situated there, without whom there could be no science concerning being qua being.[10]

God is the cause of the object of metaphysics. The position thus formulated could suggest that if metaphysics is the science concerning being in general, then God himself being the cause of the object thus conceived, is not situated in the object; that is, God is not a part of being qua being. This sort of solution would be close to Neoplatonism, since the One is above being. Was this what Albert the Great and Thomas had in mind? Albert the Great, in his *Summa Theologiae de Mirabilis Scientia Dei* (Treatise on the Wonderful Knowledge of God; circa 1393), presented a view that was already known, that God is one of the objects (but one of the eminent objects) of metaphysics.

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9   "*subiectum in metaphysica tripliciter dicitur: .... Tertio modo dicitur subiectum in metaphysi-ca tamquam a quo omnia et ad quod omnia reducuntur et procedunt, et hoc modo causa pri-ma, de qua determinatur in tribus libris ulterius* (subject of metaphysics can be spoken of in three ways: ... the third way is the subject of metaphysics from which all things proceed and to which all things are reduced, and, in this way, the first cause, which is laid down in the three books of the further). Roger Bacon, *Questiones altere* 1.7–20; cf. *Questiones altere su-pra libros prime philosophie Aristotelis* (*Metaphysical I–IV*) [Other Questions Related to the Books on First Philosophy of Aristotle], ed. Robert Steele with Ferdinand M. Delorme (Lon-don: Oxford University Press, 1932) 11:121; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 159.

10   Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 185.

In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Albert changed his position and said that only being qua being, and not God, is the object of metaphysics. Why did he do this? Albert appealed to the methodology of scientific cognition presented by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics*, where the features of the object of science are described. Ultimately, the object of science must be one; predicated properties refer to it. Moreover, the object is already present, because a science does not demonstrate the existence of its object.[11] In metaphysics, God does not meet these criteria. God appears in metaphysics as a cause, and the cause is not in a strict sense the object of a science. Predicates are not predicated of God as they are predicated of species and genera. Finally, God's existence is demonstrated only in metaphysics.[12] Notably, Albert never directly makes a pronouncement on the relation of God to the object of metaphysics, but indirectly he does so when he considers the question of substance or true being and shows that their principle (their cause) is God.[13]

As for Thomas, his position presents certain difficulties in interpretation, because his position contains an original proposition to resolve the controversy. Thomas had different terms at his disposal, and he said that theology has God as its object, and that metaphysics is the knowledge we obtain after learning the natural sciences (after physics), and first philosophy is called first because it learns about the first principles that the other sciences use.[14] As for theology, it can have divine things as its object, and so theology can have these things as the universal cause of all being.[15] Human beings, by their own cognitive powers, are unable to know divine things in themselves, but only as causes.

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11   Aristot., *An. Post.* 1.3.

12   Here, Albert is following in the footsteps of Avicenna.

13   Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 198.

14   "*De quibus omnibus est theologia, id est scientia divina, quia praecipuum in ea cognitorum est Deus, quae alio nomine dicitur metaphysica, id est trans physicam, quia post physicam discenda occurrit nobis, quibus ex sensibilibus oportet in insensibilia devenire. Dicitur etiam philosophia prima, in quantum aliae omnes scientiae ab ea sua principia accipientes eam consequuntur*" (Concerning all this, is theology, that is, the knowledge of the divine, because its principal object is God, and is also called metaphysics, that is, the other side of physics, for we learn it after physics, which by means of sensible things attains things which are immaterial. It is said, it is also called first philosophy, insofar as the principles of the other sciences, receiving their principles follow from it); Aquinas, *In Boeth. de Trin.* 2.5.1 reply.

15   "*Huiusmodi ergo res divinae, quia sunt principia omnium entium et sunt nihilominus in se naturae completae, dupliciter tractari possunt: uno modo, prout sunt principia communia omnium entium; alio modo, prout sunt in se res quaedam*" (In this, therefore, the things of God, because they are the principles of all things that are a complete natures in themselves, and nevertheless they are, can be treated in two ways: in one way, inasmuch as they

Therefore God cannot be the object of metaphysics as a science that is completely within our grasp. God can be known only as the principle of all beings.

Nonetheless God is not only a cause, but is a being in himself. God can be known as a being only by knowledge that God himself has revealed. This is contained in Sacred Scriptures, which, when interpreted scientifically, has the status of sacred doctrine (*sacra doctrina*).[16] This conception is dictated precisely by the recognition of God's transcendence; for this reason, God cannot be known directly by human beings, and there can be no merely human science concerning God.

In such a case, what is the object of metaphysics? It is Being (*ens commune*; being in general). Since scientific cognition can be reduced to a search for causes, therefore also in metaphysics, we seek the causes of *ens commune*, and it is God that is apprehended as that cause.[17]

Here a problem arises. Is God a part of *ens commune*? In other words, is *ens commune* the being created by God, or is it Being that includes both God and creation? If it were only being created by God, then God could not be found in it, and so it would not be being as *ens commune*. And if *ens commune* were to contain both creatures and God, then there would be some sort of logical error in treating God as the cause of *ens commune*, for the cause would already be inherent in *ens commune*. In view of this, we must ask what *ens commune* is for Thomas, and whence come the above difficulties, and especially how Thomas's position avoids the trap of Neoplatonism, that is, how it avoids treating Being (*ens commune*) in abstract way and avoids throwing God outside of being.

God is the cause of the object that is Being, and which is being qua being.[18] What is most universal in being and what each being must possess to be a

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are the principles of all beings; in another way, as they are things in themselves); ibid., 3.5.4 co. 3.

16   Translation suggested by Brian Davies, OP, "Is Sacra Doctrina Theology? *New Blackfriars* 71, no. 836 (March 1990): 141–147. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-2005.1990.tb01396.x.

17   "*quod quamvis ista scientia praedicta tria consideret, non tamen considerat quodlibet eorum ut subiectum, sed ipsum solum ens commune. Hoc enim est subiectum in scientia, cuius causas et passiones quaerimus, non autem ipsae causae alicuius generis quaesiti*" (although this science (metaphysics or first philosophy) studies the three things mentioned above, it does not investigate any one of them as its subject, but only being in general. For the subject of a science is the genus whose causes and properties we seek, and not the causes themselves of the particular genus studied); *Sententia Libri Metaphysicae*, Introduction.

18   "*ens inquantum ens est, habet causam ipsum Deum*" (being qua being has God himself as its cause); ibid., 6.3 1220; "*Ens commune est proprius effectus causae altissimae, scilicet Dei*" (Being is the proper effect of the Supreme Cause, which is God), *ST* 1.45.6; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 218.

being is existence, but no being possesses its reason for existence in itself; its existence comes from God as he who has in himself the reason for his own existence and can impart existence, for he possesses infinite power. Only infinite power can call a being from non-being into being, that is, in the most proper sense, only infinite power can create it. A unique situation that is incomparable to any other appears here. God must be a being, because having existence makes something a being, and God *is* existence. The temptation of the Neoplatonic approach of pushing God (the One) outside the brackets of being in order to put more emphasis on God's transcendence is of no avail in this case. God must be a being because God possesses that whereby everything that is a being is a being. God is existence. If God were not existence, there would be no being at all, including God himself under any form. For precisely this reason the above paradox appears: being, apprehended in the most general way, and so as everything, is the object of metaphysics. To know the object is to discover its causes and principles (according to Aristotle's methodology). Are causes and principles being? This depends on whether we treat them as internal causes or as external causes. If we are concerned with internal causes, then they belong to the infra-entitative order, that is, they are located in the structure of being. That is another level of inquiries in which one can know these elements by indicating their real difference, except that these elements cannot be treated as things or as independent.

Here, we cannot resolve the paradox by saying that since causes are being or beings (for if they were not, they would be non-being), then by seeking the causes of being, we are seeking being. We cannot make this assertion, because causes can be sub-entitative elements; that is, that *from which* being is composed. Additionally, there can also be causes that are beings in themselves, and not merely components of beings. This is so in the case of metaphysics, where the causes and principles of being constitute being in itself, namely God. The source of the paradox is that we cannot think that God is at the same time a cause and a being in itself if we describe the object of metaphysics as *ens commune*. For indeed, *ens commune* includes all Being, and so includes God. The only problem is that God is not *just* one of the beings! The point is not even that God is the highest of beings, or that God is the first of beings. For indeed, such a hierarchy is found in other currents of metaphysics. The point is only that God possesses in himself the essence of being, which is existence.

If, due to existence, every being is a being, then all existence comes directly from God, and existence in God is God's essence. In such a situation, the term '*being*' must apply to God, but in an analogical sense; that is, such that only God is the essential and major analogate. Therefore, since other beings have existence that comes from God, they are beings that are different from God (this

allows us to avoid pantheism); but as beings, they come completely from God, for they receive existence directly from God. This kind of metaphysical analogy allows us to avoid pushing God outside the brackets of being; it allows us to ascribe to God the essence of beingness; it allows everything that is a being to be called a being, while holding to the real difference between beings and God.

The metaphysician who seeks to know being qua being must find causes. What is being qua being for the metaphysician? It is an analogical and pluralistic structure that, in the sort of knowledge that is directly available to human beings, shows itself as unintelligible in itself, because it does not have a reason for being in itself; while it has existence, it does not possess in itself the reason for existence, since that existence is unnecessary and contingent. An attempt to understand being is open on the one hand to God, who is called the Absolute, as the reason for being; on the other hand it is open to God as the being par excellence, in his singular essence, because that essence is existence. It cannot be said that metaphysics is an ontology without God or with God who would be placed in some series together with other beings. Knowledge of God as the reason for being has the result that every being is permeated by a reference to God, and at the same time, this God appears as infinitely transcendent. The existence of any being of any sort cannot be understood unless it is as a being that comes from the divine essence.[19] If existence cannot be understood, then being cannot be understood.

As understood by Thomas, it is untenable for metaphysics to have God as its object, if metaphysics is conceived of as a body of knowledge that humanity has acquired and possesses. It is also impossible, if metaphysics has as its object *ens commune*; that is, being as a whole and what is common to all being, for metaphysics not to be open to God as a cause. That which is common to all being and that which causes a being to be a being, namely existence, is unintelligible in itself as the existence of the beings we know, because it does not follow from the essence of those beings. To understand a being is to refer that being to its cause; that is, to its reason for being; and this is not by steps, by successive emmanations, as we see in the system of Plotinus, but directly. It is to refer the being directly to God, but only to God as cause, since this God, as he is being in itself, is not directly knowable to us. Therefore, metaphysics cannot have God as its object, but must deal with God as the principle of and reason for being.[20]

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19   "*Esse, quod rebus creatis inest, non potest intelligi nisi ut deductum ab esse divino*" (yet being which is in creatures cannot be understood except as derived from the divine being). *De Potentia* 3.5 ad 1; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 220.

20   It should be remembered that Aristotle does not use the expression 'object of science' or 'object of metaphysics,' but speaks about that with which science (philosophy) deals. We

Metaphysics as a *habitus* (acquired skill) opens a person who acquires it to knowledge of real being, to being qua being, to what is common to all beings, to what the reason for being is, to existence, which, however, in each of the beings that is known, does not come from essence and is not necessary. This directs the metaphysician to God as the reason for being (the cause of being), to God who must in himself possess the reason for his own existence, to whose essence belongs existence, and who, for this reason, can, by creative action impart existence to any being that comes from him. This tension of metaphysical cognition can be seen when science is primarily understood as a *habitus* rather than as a system of propositions. For indeed, existence, which is crucial for metaphysical cognition, is expressed in a proposition, but it is a special proposition, an existential proposition-judgment, a judgment made by the knowing subject faced with existent being. This proposition does not contain the cognition of existence, because only existential judgment contains such cognition; this is a kind of judgment that a human being makes, and the metaphysician makes it in the perspective of the formulation of the object of metaphysics. The existence of the beings that we know is independent of us, but it is apprehended in specific cognitive acts that are called 'existential judgments.' At this point, we can clearly see that the way to define the object of metaphysics is not to proceed by abstraction and by formulating concepts, but rather we must consider the judgment-based contact with the existence of real things. Recognized existence allows us to determine *ens commune*, in which we turn toward the first and unique reason, which at the same time turns out to be being in the essential sense, since as unique it possesses by essence existence in itself.

None of the systems of metaphysics could be further from ontology than Thomas's metaphysics. To say that God is one of the objects of metaphysics is to acknowledge that God is an object, and so that God is directly knowable, but this is untenable. Rather, we may suppose that this first position arose because of what Aristotle himself suggested, but Aristotle did not use the term 'object.' Hence, by more clearly distinguishing between an object and a principle, and then by showing God's transcendence, Thomas was able to define properly what the object of metaphysics is, namely *ens commune*, being as existence. The fact that God is not situated within the scope of *ens commune* does not mean that God in general is found outside of metaphysics, because not everything with which a science is concerned must have the status of an object.

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can say, upon the canvas of Thomas's reflections that metaphysics deals with God, but not as an object, rather, as a principle.

Since knowledge is treated as a *habitus*, the process of knowing being qua being directed this knowledge toward God, the reason for being, and the reason for existence, showing at the same time that God not only as a principle but as being in itself is the being par excellence, because God has in himself the reason for existence; this means that God is not only the supreme being, but also means that the beingness of every being comes from God.

God as part of the object of metaphysics: Now we are crossing over to a completely different field of consideration, where the position of Scotus has been the most typical and influential. He asked about the object of metaphysics in the context of two answers. One was Avicenna's solution: that the object of metaphysics is being qua being. The second was Averroes's solution: that God and separated substances are the object. Scotus was inclined to Avicenna's position, but in such a way that in the determination of the object of metaphysics he also found room for God. Scotus thought that God could not be an object of metaphysics in the strict sense (*propter quid*), because human beings are not capable of natural cognition of God.[21] Nor can God be the cause of the object of metaphysics, because not all beings have causes, and metaphysics is supposed to be a science that is concerned with all beings.[22] Therefore, God can be part of the object of metaphysics. This happens when metaphysics is treated as a *habitus*, whereby we can draw conclusions (*habitus conclusionis*). God possesses many properties that follow from his essence. Therefore we can infer definite properties from the divine essence.

According to Scotus, God can be an object of metaphysics both *propter quid* (as a cause) and *quia* (on the basis of effects).[23] Moreover, the other objects can be referred to God as to what is first. All the objects that form the object of metaphysics are considered from one point of view, and therefore it is one science. This point of view is the reference of the other objects to God.

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21 "*De Deo autem non est scientia propter quid ut de primo subiecto*" (There is no science about God, which is looking for its causes [*propter quid*] as the first object). Aristot., *Met*.1.1n30; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 298.

22 "*Aliis duobus modis non est ista scientia circa primas causas entis, in quantum ens tenetur reduplicative, quia non omnis entis sunt causæ*" (In other two modes this science is not about first causes of being, if being is understood in a reduplicative way, because not every being has a cause). Aristot., *Met*. 1.1n82; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 302.

23 "*Deus potest esse subiectum huius scientiae primo modo propter quid ... Similiter potest esse subiectum primo modo in scientia quia*" God can be an object of this science in the first way as the cause [propter quid] ... In a similar way God can be the object in the first mode of science related to some fact [quia]). Aristot., *Met*. 1.1n131, 1.1n132; cf. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 308.

Nonetheless, human beings do not possess the sort of knowledge whereby by knowing God they could know other beings. In such a case, what remains is to know those objects in order to know God, and this is the task of metaphysics. God is the object of metaphysics not in the sense that human beings know God, for this is impossible for human beings in the present state. The point is that God is the first principle to which all conclusions are subordinated, and that God is the supreme end-purpose of metaphysical cognition. Metaphysics as a whole is subordinated to knowing God. It is in this sense that God is the object of this science.

Thus, human beings do not possess objective and direct knowledge concerning God as cause (*propter quid*), but they possess knowledge of effects (*quia*); that is, about what comes from God. God's is a privileged place among the other objects of metaphysics because God is the ultimate end-purpose of metaphysical cognition.

What, from the side of the object, connects all the objects of metaphysics? It is the concept of being (*conceptus entis*). This concept is univocal, that is, it is predicated in the same way of God and of creatures. On this account, metaphysics is one science and covers all beings. This concept of being contains within it as a fundamental concept the concept of infinite and finite being. The concept of infinite being applies to God, and the concept of finite being applies to creatures. God, therefore, is contained in the object of metaphysics, which is the concept of being. The concept of being as the object of metaphysics contains only real beings, not intentional beings. This concept exposes the most important essence of things. It is by our possession of a univocal concept of being that refers to the creature and the Creator in the same way that allows us to know God at all. For Scotus, the elaboration of the object of metaphysics as One, the univocal concept of Being, was intended to open the way for the natural cognition of God. In the concept of being a virtual knowledge of God is contained, and the first principle should contain such a property so that all principles and conclusions would be virtually contained in it.[24]

To summarize, Scotus's position diverges both from the Arabic commentators and from Thomas. The object is not God, because revelation deals with God, and human beings, in their present state (after original sin), by means of their own powers, cannot know God directly. God is not the cause of the object of metaphysics, because that object must take in all being, including God and separate substances. Also, this object is not being qua being. Instead, its object is the concept of being (*conceptus entis*). This concept of being, which is specific to the human mode of knowing, is univocal, and it includes all beings,

24   Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?*, 309–326.

including God. It includes God in this way: the concept of being is first of all divided into finite and infinite. God lies on the side of the infinite concept of being.

Scotus was the first to introduce univocity in the concept of being, which had been apprehended in an analogical way in metaphysics. He cautioned that here, it was not a question of univocity in being, but in cognition. Beings are analogical, but metaphysical cognition relies on a univocal concept of being. This univocity allows us to consider metaphysics as a unified science insofar as it opens metaphysics to God and to creatures. God appears as a negation of finitude, as an infinite being. By the univocal concept of being, we already have a germinal knowledge of God, who, at a further stage of metaphysical knowledge, becomes the most important end-purpose of cognition. This concept is very poor in content; i.e., the only content is the principle of non-contradiction and nothing more, but it is valuable to metaphysicians because it allows them to take in the whole of being, together with God, who is infinite, who is the First Being, and the most important End.

If God is a part of the object of metaphysics in the sense that He is contained in that object, it should be explained additionally that this object is a concept, or more precisely, the concept of being. God can be discovered in the object of metaphysics as the *modus* of the concept of being; this is the concept of infinite being, the second side of which is the concept of finite being, and that is created being. Here, we see the main difference between the metaphysics of Thomas and that of Scotus. For Scotus, the understanding of being as a concept becomes key; and for Thomas, existence, which is not contained in a concept but only in a judgment (later called an existential judgment), is key.

Scotus's metaphysics is directed toward knowing God; its object as the end (for the end is joined to the object) is not being qua being, but God. For this reason, Scotus's metaphysics cannot be called an ontology. Neither is it a theology, because such a knowledge of God (in the natural light of reason) occurs in metaphysical cognition. The cognition of God qua God is studied in theology based on revelation. Scotus's metaphysics was truly a metaphysics. Yet, in it were certain moments that would cause this metaphysics to evolve into an ontology, but this would not take place until modern times. Even so, the sort of approach to the metaphysical issues we observe in Thomas and Scotus as the most representative and at the same time, the most different, does not indicate that another conception, namely ontology, should be added to the descriptions of metaphysics.

The opposition that is presented at times in the Middle Ages as existing between ontology and metaphysics is unwarranted. We are still in the area of

different approaches to metaphysics, but it is still metaphysics. Only after a closer study of the context in which ontology arose and the direction in which it developed in modern times and more recent times will we be more capable of answering in a precise fashion the question of the extent to which ontology was already making an appearance in the Middle Ages. Certainly, it was not ontology opposed to metaphysics or separated from metaphysics.[25]

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25   Just as there was no ontology in the Middle Ages, it is hard to speak of any ontology in
      Aristotle, despite what Fernando Inciarte, for one example, says when he summarizes
      his reflections: "*Die Aristotelische Metaphysik beginnt somit als Ontologie und erreicht ihre
      Vollendung, bei der sie allerdings nicht wie beim Ende eines Prozesses aufhören muß, als
      Theologie* (Aristotle's Metaphysics begins as ontology and reaches its fulfillment, which,
      however, does not have to belong to some process like theology); "Die Einheit der Aristo-
      telischen Metaphysik" [The Unity of Aristotelian Metaphysics], *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*
      101, no. 1 (1994): 1–21 at 21. Aristotle's use of the expression, 'the science about being qua
      being,' does not show that this was ontology, because strictly speaking modern ontology
      appeared in a context that was different from Aristotle's metaphysics. Only if we know
      this context can we say when the science of being qua being is ontology and when it is not.

Summary of Part 1

An analysis of the context in which philosophy arose, both as a distinct domain of culture and a type of science, has showed that philosophy is a product of Greek genius, even though human beings, by nature, are philosophical beings, and philosophical questions appear in all civilizations. However, philosophy as a type of scientific knowledge that possesses its own object (a material and a formal object), as well as its own method, end, and scientific questions, first appeared in ancient Greek culture and nowhere else at that time. The domain that would be called metaphysics, not by the Greeks but by their heirs, crystallized within the framework of philosophy.

Metaphysics was a domain that, on the one hand, wanted to comprehend all reality, and on the other hand, aspired to know the supreme principles and causes of reality. This was a pioneering task, because it entered upon new paths and a new way of knowing something that previously had been located in mythology. However, considering the changing events in the history of those individuals that developed metaphysics, and the influences of various cultures and civilizations, those domains did not develop in a linear fashion, but were shaken up in various ways. Nevertheless, the position of philosophy and metaphysics was increasingly strengthened in the cultures of the peoples who had the opportunity to draw upon the Greek heritage, take it up, and admire it. Such was the case with Syrian culture, Arabic culture, and Christian culture. Philosophy and metaphysics helped them to better understand reality, and at the same time, it provided them with support in their own interpretation of sacred texts, without which philosophy might be interpreted arbitrarily and could lapse into mythology. For these reasons, ontology had not yet appeared in ancient times or in the Middle Ages. Although ontology has roots in ancient and medieval philosophy, this was the result of the separation of metaphysics from reality and from God, and that is a product of modern times.

The Rise of Ontology

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Medieval metaphysics found its apogee in the systems of authors such as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, but the decline of metaphysics would begin in the fourteenth century, and this would result in the complete collapse of metaphysics in the fifteenth century. The collapse was mainly the result of nominalism, which was becoming stronger and stronger.

Nominalism had appeared in the eleventh century, before the most important philosophical legacy was received in the Latin world in the thirteenth century. Then, fifteen-century nominalism, represented chiefly by William of Ockham, deliberately undermined any meaning in the cultivation of metaphysics because it struck at the fundamental principles whereby metaphysicians tried to apprehend reality in a rational way. Nominalism undermined principles such as nature, essence, cause, and substance and so, undermined everything that allows us to comprehend reality and being qua being. Logic took the place of metaphysics. While logic retained its universal dimension, it did not lend itself to criticism, because the operations of logic have a denotation-oriented character. Logic is not oriented to essence or existence. The defeat of human reason was so complete that reason was not capable of knowing reality in its existence and richness. After all, logical cognition is directed purely to denotation, and so it is very poor. Thus, logic cannot take the place of metaphysics.

Metaphysics did not fall completely. While it remained on the curriculum in the lyceum schools and in institutions of higher education run by the Catholic Church, the great battles over metaphysics did not necessarily leave their mark in education programs. Modern philosophy was born on the basis of those school programs, from which the creators of modern philosophy received the rudiments of philosophical learning. This applies to Descartes and Francis Bacon. The protestant universities played a direct role in the rise of ontology; their curriculum was more strongly rooted in the tradition of the medieval disputations on metaphysics. It is worth noting what sort of concept of philosophy and metaphysics crystallized in modern times, and how it contributed to the rise of ontology.

Descartes and Malebranche—The Return of Augustinianism

Although Descartes is recognized as a symbol of a completely new approach to philosophy, and modern and contemporary philosophy began with him, research that has been done over many decades on the sources of his philosophy shows how much he was indebted to the thought of ancient times and the Middle Ages.[1] Moreover, European philosophy after Descartes has not been a linear development of his views at all, but instead, there are continual discussions, formulated arguments, and accepted terms that have their source in an education based on a scholastic schema. If we accept that ontology is the fruit of modern times, this does not mean that it had its immediate source in Descartes. What is more interesting, Descartes himself only rarely and without deeper analyses appealed to metaphysics. This means that the rise and development of modern and contemporary ontology has a non-Cartesian genesis, or more precisely, a pre-Cartesian genesis, in which Descartes played no role.[2]

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1 Étienne Gilson's *Index scolastico-cartésien* (Index of the Cartesian School), 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: J. Vrin. 1912/1979) should be regarded as a pioneering work, as well as Gilson's dissertation, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du system Cartésien* [Studies on the Role of Medieval Thought in the Formation of the Cartesian System] (Paris: Vrin, 1930/1984).

2 We should not forget that Descartes was a student of the Jesuit College of La Flèche, at which the course of philosophy was developed mainly under the influence of Francisco Suárez. Thus, Descartes's views on particular philosophical questions and how he understood certain terms had to have been influenced by Suárez, although he described them in general terms as the view of philosophers or scholastics; cf. Santiago Fern Ández Burillo, "Introducción a la teoria del conocimiento de Francisco Suárez" [Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge of Francisco Suárez], *Pensamiento: Revista de investigación e información filosófica* 189/192, no. 48 (1992): 211–230, at 213–214. His introduction of the difference between the formal concept and the object concept was especially important. This allowed Descartes to treat ideas as independent things as the object of knowledge. For the sake of accuracy, we should add that along with Suárez, the following writers influenced Descartes: Peter Fonseca, Francis Toletus, Eustache of St. Paul, and Charles F. D'Abra de Raconis. The *Ratio Studiorum* in La Flèche included three years of philosophy courses. The first year was logic (they used the logical works of Francis Toletus and Fonseca). The second year was physics (Aristotle's *On the Heavens,* and *On Generation and Corruption*). The third year was metaphysics (the second book of *On Generation and Corruption*, the books of *On the Soul*, and of *Metaphysics*). Evidently, the Spanish influence appeared at the level of interpretation, because in the commentaries, they

The word 'metaphysics' appears only rarely in Descartes's works. In the *Meditations*, we encounter the term only once, and in *Treatise on Method*, only twice. In the latter, the entire fourth part was supposed to be metaphysical, since metaphysics had appeared as a subtitle (but only in the Latin version of the work). What, then, did Descartes understand by metaphysics? For him, it was a kind of knowledge that would prove the existence of God and the soul. Thus, we find ourselves very far indeed from how metaphysics was classically understood, where its object was being qua being. Descartes instead looked to Augustine of Hippo (who was not a metaphysician), who, as a philosopher and theologian, wanted to know two things, God and the soul, but not being qua being.[3]

In the *Meditations,* Descartes connected metaphysics with arguments for the existence of God (although there was still no mention of the soul).[4] The full title of this work was *Meditations on First Philosophy, in which the Existence of God and the Immortality of the Soul are Proven*.[5] Thus, metaphysics and first philosophy are for Descartes the same science because they have the same object. In both works, there was no talk of being (qua being) at all. If the word 'being' (*ens*) appears, it is only with respect to God, who is called the most perfect being (*ens summe perfectum*), and the supreme being (*summum ens*).[6]

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tended to draw on authors who were treated as authorities in similar Jesuit schools. The commentaries were by the Jesuit Fathers of Coimbra on the *Physics* and *On the Soul*, Fonseca's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, and Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae*. In his own works, Descartes looked to the Fathers of Coimbra, to Toletus, and to Suárez. In addition, Descartes knew Eustache of St. Paul's *Summa Philosophiae* (which he regarded highly) and D'Abra de Raconis' *Totius Philosophiae Tractatus*. The distinction between the formal concept and the objective concept is also found in Toletus (in his commentary on Aristotle's logic and in his commentary on Thomas's *Summa theologica*), in Fonseca in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in Eustache of Saint Paul's *Philosophical Summa*, in D'Abra de Raconis' *Totius Philosophiae*, and finally in Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae*; cf. Timothy J. Cronin, *Objective Being in Descartes and in Suárez* (New York: Garland, 1987), 31–36.

3   "*Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino*" (I want to know God and the soul. Nothing more? nothing at all). Augustine, *Soliloquia* 1. 7.

4   Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3.4.

5   "*Rationes quibus existentia Dei et animae humanae probatur, quae sunt Metaphysicae fundamenta*" (The reasons for which it is proved the existence of God and of the human soul, which are the foundations of the Metaphysics) was the subtitle of the Latin version of *Discourse on Method*. For Descartes, metaphysics was the science that demonstrates the existence of God and the soul, not the science about being qua being.

6   "*adeo ut non magis repugnet cogitare Deum* (*hoc est ens summe perfectum*)" (there is no less repugnance to our conceiving a God (that is, a Being supremely perfect)), *Meditations* 5.79; "*et me tantam medium quid inter Deum et nihil, sive inter summum ens et non ens*" (I am in a

Interestingly, although the *Meditations* was supposed to be about first philosophy, the expression 'first philosophy' does not appear in the text itself. The expression also does not appear in his *Treatise on Method*. Thus, Descartes was looking to a certain tradition, but in a very superficial manner, such that he did not attach great weight to the expressions metaphysics and first philosophy, which had been perpetuated over centuries.

Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate, in her letters to Descartes, used the word 'metaphysics' to mean Descartes's philosophy. She also called it 'metaphysical meditations' (letters of May 16, 1643 and June 20, 1643). If Descartes referred to metaphysics in his letters, he did so in connection with God and the soul, just as he did in his standard works (letter of June 28, 1643). Thus, in Descartes's writings, metaphysics was understood consistently in an Augustinian fashion.[7]

While Descartes, himself, rarely resorted to the word 'metaphysics,' Nicolas Malebranche did otherwise. Malebranche was Descartes's heir, but critical of his philosophy. Malebranche did not avoid metaphysics, and even wrote a separate work devoted to metaphysics, the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*.[8]

How did Malebranche understand metaphysics? Although the terms 'metaphysics' and 'metaphysical' appear rather often, we get the impression that Malebranche did not stand at a sufficient distance in history from metaphysics as such. When he defined metaphysics, he was referring not to an object of metaphysics such as being, but to the meaning of so-called universal truths, since he was concerned with the particular sciences and theology. So, he said that metaphysics gathers knowledge of universal truths that are the principles for the particular sciences, and is not concerned with abstract considerations of fictitious properties that lend only to interminable and quarrelsome disputations.[9] The shift in emphasis to universal truths clearly indicates that metaphysics was changing from the theory of being to the theory of knowledge.

There are still other contexts that show how Malebranche understood metaphysics. The metaphysical questions include the difference between the soul and the body, the difference between the world that is inhabited by our

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sense something intermediate between God and nothing; i.e. placed in such a manner between the supreme Being and non-being), ibid., 4.61.

7   Cf. Andrea Nye, *The Princess and the Philosopher* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

8   Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*, ed. Jonathan Bennett (2007).

9   Ibid., 6.2.

bodies and the world we see, and the nature of ideas.[10] Moreover, the question of whether something exists that does not possess extension is metaphysical,[11] as is the question of the modes of cognition: a priori (purely ratiocinative), and a posteriori (with the help of experience). In the case of the first question, one speaks of the universal laws that govern the union of our souls and our reason, and about the general laws that govern the union of our souls with our bodies.[12] The ideas that belong to the intelligible world are called metaphysical.[13] Metaphysical problems are problems connected with our perception of ideas that are found in God.[14] Proofs are metaphysical if they are based on clear ideas.[15] The true principles of metaphysics not only are not opposed to the truths of faith, but indeed are necessary in order to understand those truths.[16] Metaphysics helps us to understand the mystery of transubstantiation.[17] In principle, however, it is not necessary for faith that we base faith on a perfect knowledge of metaphysical reasons.[18] Metaphysics has a very important role; as it serves religion it allows us to shed light on those truths, and this light strengthens our minds and allows our minds to be in full agreement with our hearts.[19]

So we see right away that Malebranche calls the questions that bothered Descartes 'metaphysical.' Malebranche's metaphysics is a development of Cartesianism; it is connected with Augustine's Platonism and with Christian theology. But it is not metaphysics as it was traditionally conceived, as the science concerning being.

In what sense was Malebranche able to prepare the way for future ontology? He regarded the real world as unknowable and made metaphysics in the traditional sense completely unnecessary. The place of metaphysics was taken by knowledge of the ideas in God. This belonged more to Neoplatonic idealism, and it could lead to a kind of philosophy whose object would be concepts, essences, or ideas. That sort of philosophy would later be called 'ontology.'

Metaphysics as the theory of being became superfluous. What would it be needed for? It is needed, if we want to learn about the being that surrounds us,

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10   Ibid., 1.

11   Ibid., 1.2.

12   Ibid., 1.10.

13   Ibid., 1.10.

14   Ibid., 3.12.

15   Ibid., 3.15.

16   Ibid., 6.2.

17   Ibid., 10.11.

18   Ibid., 14.13.

19   Ibid., 14.13.

the being that is difficult to know, yet is knowable under the aspect of what it is, how it is, on what account it is, and that it is at all. These questions disappear if we accept the perspective of knowing in God ideas that are self-evident.

To sum up, Descartes and Malebranche shifted the object of philosophical knowledge to ideas, whether ideas in the human mind (Descartes), or in God's mind (Malebranche). This had to lead to the fall of metaphysics as it was traditionally conceived; that is, whose object is being qua being. In both cases, reality, upon whose canvas the concept of being qua being crystallizes, is unknowable. Only ideas can be known, and there is no reason to include them under the term 'being qua being.' Only the Augustinian version of metaphysics remains; it has as its objects, apart from ideas, God and the soul. In any case, Cartesianism does not lead directly to ontology, and so we must search for other currents and philosophical schools.

British Philosophy: The Marginalization of Metaphysics

In British philosophy, there was a clear turn toward philosophy that was directed to practical matters rather than theoretical analyses. Moreover, philosophy in the theoretical sense was condemned as an unnecessary occupation, and this applied especially to metaphysics. Another thing was that classical philosophy was not very well known; many British philosophers remained at an unsophisticated level of education with regard to their knowledge of classical philosophy, and often, they had developed an ideological aversion to the Greek and medieval legacy.

One example would be Francis Bacon. More than once, Bacon expressed his aversion to Aristotle and Aristotle's conception of philosophy. Meanwhile, that renowned reformer of modern science had entered Cambridge University when he was just twelve years old; he studied there only for two years (from April 1573 to December 1575), and his studies were even interrupted for eight months (in 1574) because of an epidemic.[1] One could suppose that the youth's contact with philosophy for one year must have been very superficial. After all, this would seem to be reflected in his later works.

In Bacon's work, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), the word 'metaphysics' appears several times, but in what sense does it appear? Bacon thought that theology, first philosophy, and metaphysics were different sciences. Natural theology studies God in the light of the natural reason on the basis of creatures, whereas divine theology is based on revelation. This sort of view was standard in the Middle Ages and did not contain anything new. What was new was his distinction between philosophy and metaphysics. According to Bacon, first philosophy was the foundation of all the sciences, because it investigated their shared principles and axioms and because it was concerned with the relative and accidental features of things such as quantity, similarity, difference, possibility, and so forth, while it kept in view their real action, and not only in thought. With what is metaphysics occupied? Bacon knew the division of the objects of philosophy, those that are, 'inherent in matter, and therefore transitory' (with which physics was concerned), and those that are, 'abstract

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1   Kazimierz Żydek, "Franciszek Bacon—reformator nauki?" [Francis Bacon—Reformer of Science?], *Człowiek w kulturze* 4–5 (1995): 104–105.

and fixed' (with which metaphysics was concerned). But what sort of objects would they be? When Bacon considered the properties of the objects of physics and metaphysics, he concluded that it was a question of causes, some of which were material, and others immaterial: physics was concerned with the material and the efficient cause, while metaphysics was concerned with the formal and final cause.[2]

That conception was rather simplistic and, in historical terms, it was wrong, because each of these sciences investigated all four causes, although for different reasons: physics was concerned with explaining change, while metaphysics was concerned with explaining being.[3] Although metaphysical inquiries culminate in the discovery of the final cause, which is God, the concept of the cause, as an analogical concept, is also present at the level of changes that encompass all nature and being, insofar as this undergoes change. Hence, physics must also resort to the final cause, and metaphysics resorts to it only as to the single supreme cause. Bacon did not consider these subtleties mainly because he had not studied Aristotle's *Metaphysics* or his *Physics* in depth.

The division of first philosophy from metaphysics is out of place, especially when the point is to divide one from the other based on the kind of causes involved, and causes in general. After all, causes are that whereby we know an object, and they are not the object.

It is surprising that Bacon did not consider 'being' at all as the object of metaphysics. For precisely this reason, metaphysics would be concerned with universal axioms and principles, for they are first of all properties of being qua being. If being as the object of metaphysics is absent, then the center of gravity is shifted to causes, which are parceled out to the various sciences. In turn then, the first principles and shared axioms begin to form a sort of separate space that is not anchored in reality. Sooner or later, it is shifted to the epistemological, logical, or ontological level. If these principles are not anchored in being qua being, whence do they draw their universal power? If we do not anchor our metaphysical principles in being qua being, then we will need to find another support for them. In that case, it would be neither metaphysics nor first philosophy.

Bacon's inclusion of the categories in first philosophy and exclusion of the categories from metaphysics are misunderstandings. The so-called division

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2   "The one part, which is physic, inquireth and handleth the material and efficient causes; and the other, which is metaphysics, handleth the formal and final causes"; Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* 2.7.

3   The four cases are needed in every philosophical explanation, but all the more in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*. Therefore Aristotle appeals to all the causes in each science.

of being into categories is an essential division, because the categories themselves express the modes of being that are most fundamental, and which are irreducible to one another.[4]

We find an exposition of the role of the cognition of essence in the framework of metaphysics in the *Novum Organum* (1620), Bacon's next seminal work. Therein, he stated that metaphysics investigates eternal and unchanging forms,[5] but criticized the concept of the final cause, thinking that it corresponded to the nature of humanity, and not to the nature of the universe.[6] This means that the final cause has no objective reality, but is rather a human projection; it is an attempt to explain the world of nature and the cosmos as if that world operated in human fashion. However, when it is a question of the efficient cause and the material cause, Bacon reserved these for physics alone.[7]

To summarize, metaphysics as Francis Bacon conceived of it investigates essences; this means that Bacon's understanding of metaphysics is in the framework of a line of thought that reaches back chiefly to Avicenna and Scotus; they expounded on the role of essence as the object of metaphysics. This does not show that Bacon was consciously supporting a metaphysics understood in essentialist terms, because, after all, he never delved deeply into medieval treatises. Instead, Bacon's implicit understanding of metaphysics in an essential manner, shows how metaphysics was understood at Cambridge.

In view of this, the question arises as to what extent Francis Bacon and Descartes consciously modified how metaphysics and first philosophy were understood, and to what extent the changes resulted from their having a philosophical education that was too narrow, such as both had received.

Another representative of British thought, Thomas Hobbes, wrote about philosophy and metaphysics within the context of the university programs of his time, with which he was acquainted. He was very negative in his appraisal of these programs, as evinced in the chapter titles in his famous *Leviathan* (1651); for example, he discusses metaphysics in the chapter, "Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions." Hobbes thought that the study of philosophy had only the character of the 'handmaiden of the Roman religion,' that is, the Catholic religion. This is not philosophy in general, but the philosophy of Aristotle.

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4   Aristot., *Met*. 6.2.
5   "Thus, let the investigation of forms, which are (in the eye of reason at least, and in their essential law) eternal and immutable, constitute *metaphysics*"; Bacon, *Novum Organum* 2.9.
6   Ibid., 1.48.
7   Ibid., 2.9.

Hobbes spoke more precisely of first philosophy[8] and of metaphysics. In Hobbes's opinion, first philosophy was that upon which all philosophy depended; first philosophy was occupied with limiting "the meanings of such names as are most general among all others."[9] In other words, definitions are limitations that allow us to avoid ambiguity and equivocation in reasoning. With that said, one can ask: definitions of what objects? Here, Hobbes mentions the following: 'objects': body, time, place, matter, form, essence, subject, substance, property, possibility, finitude, infinity, quantity, quality, motion, action, the passive reception of action. As we see, these are objects drawn from metaphysics, except that they are mentioned in a rather arbitrary order. Here we can also find the so-called categories (time, place, substance) and elements of the structure of being (matter, form) as well as Scotus's disjunctive transcendental (finite—infinite).

But such metaphysical terms as 'being,' 'potency,' and 'act' are absent. Most importantly, Hobbes looks at these objects from a semantic and logical point of view, not from a strictly metaphysical point of view. Moreover, he seeks definitions where they cannot be found, because these objects are located on the analogical plane, which is not translatable to an univocal definition. Meanwhile, according to Hobbes, the metaphysics that was taught in the universities is precisely the establishment of meanings.[10] According to Hobbes, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was understood somewhat differently, for they were "books written or placed after his natural philosophy."[11] Here, Hobbes was referring to one of the interpretations of the title *tà metà tà physiká* (he believed that Aristotle was not the author of the title). Then, more critical comments come:

> [In schools] there [metaphysics] signifieth as much as *books written or placed after* [Aristotle's] *natural philosophy:* but the schools take them for books of supernatural philosophy: for the word *metaphysics* will bear both these senses. And indeed that which is there written, is for the most part so far from the possibility of being understood, and so repugnant to

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8   Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, 4:46.

9   Ibid.

10   "The Explication, that is, the settling of the meaning of which, and the like Terms, is commonly in the Schools called Metaphysiques; as being a part of the Philosophy of Aristotle, which hath that for title," ibid.

11   Ibid.

natural reason, that whosoever thinketh there is anything to be under-
stood by it, must needs think it supernatural.[12]

In this passage, Hobbes is ironically and directly saying that Aristotle's *Meta-physics* is so difficult that some sort of supernatural power would be necessary to understand it. Such an opinion is very strange, since Aristotle's *Metaphysics* for centuries had been read and commented upon in many civilizations; it had been translated into many languages, and commentaries were written on it independent of any religion or supernatural grace. One may ask, could it be that Hobbes had never held Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his own hand and was repeating the opinion of someone else?

When Hobbes criticized metaphysics, he had in mind not only its connec-tion with Sacred Scripture (which created 'school theology'), but was thinking primarily of its views concerning essences that are separate from bodies (called 'abstract essences' and 'substantial forms'). This criticism is an expression of a simplified way of looking at the problem of universals, and it was located within the framework of a clearly nominalistic position. He did not consider that the thesis concerning abstract essence could not be found in Aristotle's metaphysics, but was found in a version of that metaphysics formulated under the influence of Avicenna and Scotus; such a version was clearly found in the scholastic textbooks of philosophy. The names of these authors do not appear in *Leviathan*. It is probable that when Hobbes was writing about metaphysics, he was not well acquainted with the variety of currents in metaphysics, which views were those of Aristotle, or in what way Thomas differed from Scotus.

To summarize, Hobbes's criticism of metaphysics is limited to a certain cur-rent of metaphysics cultivated at Oxford. His critique argued for the complete rejection of metaphysics, instead of seeking a version of metaphysics that would be acceptable as a science.

The next Englishman we shall consider is John Locke. In his *An Essay Con-cerning Human Understanding* (1689), he used the adjective 'metaphysical' three times, each time to emphasize that ideas or words are true if the things they concern exist in reality.[13] He spoke once of 'metaphysics,' or more pre-cisely, of the 'metaphysician,' whom he identified with the 'schoolman'; both raise questions that have their place in the philosophy of nature and ethics.[14]

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12   Ibid.

13   "Indeed both ideas and words may be said to be true, in a metaphysical sense of the word truth; as all other things that any way exist are said to be true, i.e. really to be such as they exist." Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2.32.2; cf. 4.5.11.

14   Ibid., 3.10.2.

Metaphysics itself appears in a very disadvantageous light because of semantic and epistemological analyses. Locke said that the judgments of metaphysics concerning substance, human beings, animals, form, soul, vegetative life, sensory life, and rational life, are uncertain and do not extend our knowledge of reality.[15]

This criticism of metaphysics is based on Locke's theory of knowledge according to which the object of cognition can be reduced to ideas; some ideas are simple, while others are complex. When one uses such a method and such criteria, all metaphysical terms must seem to be cognitively dubious. But such a method is constructed in an a priori manner, with no regard for how reality can be not only complex but also complicated. When metaphysical categories or the component elements of being (such as matter, form, act, potency or existence) come into play, then it is clear that the model of the theory of knowledge that Locke proposed is completely inadequate for metaphysics.

Here, the critique of metaphysics was done from outside (not from the viewpoint of metaphysical systems), as it were, by the mediation of a theory of knowledge and a theory of language that did not allow the core of the truly metaphysical issues to enter the discussion. For this reason, the critique is not very profound, although it turned out to be rather influential and effective.

As for David Hume, metaphysics appeared in the context of a division into two kinds of philosophy. One was moral philosophy, which investigates human intellect for practical reasons, and the second was 'accurate and abstruse' philosophy, which investigates human nature for cognitive reasons.[16] He located metaphysics within the framework of the second kind. Here, Hume did not have the best opinion of metaphysics; but it is worthwhile to examine what he understood by metaphysics.

Hume thought that metaphysics was, for the most part, not a science, but was the result of "the fruitless efforts of human vanity" or that it comes "from the craft of popular superstitions, which, being unable to defend themselves

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15   "By this method one may make demonstrations and undoubted propositions in words, and yet thereby advance not one jot in the knowledge of the truth of things; e.g., he that having learnt these following words, with their ordinary mutual relative acceptations annexed to them; e.g., SUBSTANCE, MAN, ANIMAL, FORM, SOUL, VEGETATIVE, SENSITIVE, RATIONAL, may make several undoubted propositions about the soul, without knowing at all what the soul really is: and of this sort, a man may find an infinite number of propositions, reasonings, and conclusions, in books of metaphysics, school-divinity, and some sort of natural philosophy; and, after all, know as little of God, spirits, or bodies, as he did before he set out": ibid., 4.8.9.

16   David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," in *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*, ed. Edwin A. Burtt (New York: Modern Library, 1939), Sec. 1, 586.

on fair ground, raise these entangling brambles to cover and protect their weakness."[17] While the first part of the statement would allow us to surmise that metaphysics according to Hume wants to reach things that are unknowable to our mind (metaphysical agnosticism), the second part, with its rich metaphor, effectively obscures its author's thought; when he accused metaphysics of darkness, he became even more obscure. Hume was also repelled by metaphysical arguments and 'metaphysical jargon.'[18] Metaphysics is a dark science that serves "only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error!"[19]

This state of affairs comes from "the obscurity of the ideas, and ambiguity of the terms."[20] Some examples of obscure ideas are power, force, energy, and necessary connection.[21] They are obscure because they are composite ideas, but their connection with simple ideas is not transparent. Also, at the level of sensory cognition, which is the field wherein simple ideas are apprehended, Hume claims that there is nothing that would indicate the presence of the metaphysical ideas he mentioned.[22]

In fact, the metaphysics with which Hume was acquainted from his studies did not present, according to him, any cognitive value, because it did not contain abstract arguments from mathematics or arguments based on experience that would apply to facts or existence. In such a situation, Hume recommended that works of this type (whether devoted to metaphysics or to theology) should be thrown into the flames.[23]

Undoubtedly, the concept of metaphysics (and of philosophy generally) that Hume possessed was very narrow, not to say limited. It was all the easier for him to move to a critique of some of the objects or concepts of metaphysics solely on the basis of what he had learned in his student days. This criticism grew probably from empiricist and nominalistic assumptions, and it was all the more effective because its opponent, the metaphysics with which Hume was acquainted, had only a slight resemblance to the great metaphysical systems

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17   Ibid.

18   Ibid., 590.

19   Ibid., 592.

20   Ibid., 621.

21   Ibid.

22   Ibid., 621–622.

23   "When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion," ibid., 689.

such as the systems of Thomas or Scotus. Hume's concept of metaphysics was even weaker than Locke's, which may be seen from Locke's and Hume's definitions of metaphysics and its objects. Hume approached metaphysics with a large dose of emotion, which can be found both in how he presented metaphysics (malicious metaphor) and in practical counsels for the measures of the inquisition (book burning).

This critique of metaphysics shifted the center of gravity in the cultivation of philosophy to epistemology and semantics, and from a broader perspective, contributed to the establishment of ontology as different from metaphysics. Its starting point would be not facts and existence, but clear and univocal concepts, together with concomitant agnosticism that would set the limits of human cognition. Hume's role in the establishment of such an ontology was by way of Kant, who received Hume's critique of traditional metaphysics at face value, and then searched for new solutions that would lead to a new understanding of metaphysics and to the establishment of ontology.

The Founders of Ontology: From Lorhard to Clauberg

Neither the French nor the British current of modern philosophy led directly to the rise of ontology. It came about because of the German current, or to be precise, protestant scholastic metaphysics, which began to develop at the end of the sixteenth century. Ontology was certainly a product of German academic thought.

The first question appears here: whence came the interest in metaphysics in protestant circles, especially since Martin Luther was a firm opponent of philosophy in general, and had special contempt and even hostility for Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas?[1] The answer is complex. It should be first explained that it was not Luther but Philip Melanchthon who brought Greek culture to the attention of the Protestant world. Melanchthon taught Greek at the University of Wittenberg; he lectured on mathematics as the foundation of philosophy, and lectured and commented on Aristotle's physics and astronomy.[2] In this, he was not concerned with metaphysics, and as the Preceptor Germaniæ (minister of education), he even excluded metaphysics from the curriculum.[3]

What was the source of the interest in metaphysics among protestant professors, for whom metaphysics should have been alien for religious reasons? The answer is not complicated: the religious war between Catholics and Protestants was also an ideological war, a war at the level of thought. Protestants, in their desire to fight Catholicism, had to answer the call to battle in the field of

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1   According to Luther, "Aristotle is the godless bulwark of the papists. He is to theology what darkness is to the light. His ethics is the worst enemy of grace" As for Thomas, "he never understood a chapter of the Gospel or Aristotle." Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (New York: Scribner, 1950), 30–31.

2   Charlotte Methuen, "The Role of the Heavens in the Thought of Philip Melanchton," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, no. 3 (1996): 385–403.

3   Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* [The German School of Metaphysics of the 17th Century] (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Siebeck, 1939), 36. Concerning the influence of scholasticism on the Reformation, cf. Alister E. McGrath and Aldo Comba, *Il pensiero della riforma: Lutero, Zwingli, Calvino, Bucero: Una introduzione* [The Thought of the Reform: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer: An Introduction], 2nd ed. (Torino: Claudiana, 1995), 92–99.

philosophy.[4] They had to return to philosophy and learn it, including that most important domain of philosophy, metaphysics, which Luther hated so much.

Here the Protestants faced a key question: from whom should they learn this philosophy? They looked to the Iberian Peninsula, which, in the sixteenth century, was the strongest center cultivating the tradition of scholastic philosophy, including of course metaphysics.[5]

They had a considerable range of alternatives. They had Peter Fonseca's work, *Institutiones dialecticae* (1564) and his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (1577); Benedict Pereira's *Metaphysica disputatio de ente et eius proprietatibus* (1587); and finally, Francis Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597).[6] Suárez turned out to be the most influential.[7] The new form of the lecture was becoming influential; it was not a commentary on Aristotle's metaphysics as

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4   Ibid., 35–37.

5   Beginning in the fourteenth century in Spain, the influences of Scotism were increasing at the level of the *Studium Generale* and, to a lesser degree, at the university level. In the province of Aragon, there were four *Studia Generalia* in theology (Barcelona, Lérida, Valencia, and Mallorca), and one in philosophy (Zaragoza); in Castile there were four in theology (Toledo, Valladolid, Palencia, and Seville); in the Santiago province there was a *Studium* in Salamanca. In the fifteenth century, three theological systems were used as a foundation: Thomism (*via Sancti Thomae*), Scotism (*via Scoti*), and nominalism (*via Nominalium*). However, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Scotus began to dominate, and his works were read at all universities ("*en todas las Universidades se lee*"). From the year 1560, the predominance of Scotism was firmly established because only Scotus's works were read in the theological course of studies. This situation continued for over two centuries, because only since 1771 was the teaching of Scotus's doctrine directed solely to the clergy, and in the 1820s, those chairs were generally liquidated. Janeiro Isaac Vázquez, "La enseñanza del escotismo en España" [Teaching Scotism in Spain], in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti* [The Doctrine of John Duns Scotus], 194–220.

6   Cf. Piero Di Vona, *Studi sulla scolastica della controriforma: L'esistenca e la sua distinzione metafisica dall'essenza* [Scholastic Studies of the Counter-Reformation: Existence and Metaphysical Distinction from Essence] (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1968), 70–77.

7   *Ma è ben certo che col 1600, l'anno della edizione di Magonza delle Disputationes Metaphysicae, le tendenze fondamentali dei metafisici tedeschi cambiano rapidamente ed a svantaggio del tomismo. Suárez fu accolto come principe e papa dei metafisici assai prima che Heereboord lo dichiarasse tale* (It is sure that in 1600, a year of publishing in Mainz Metaphysical Disputations, the fundamental tendencies of German metaphysicians changed rapidly and in disadvantage of Thomism. Suárez was accepted as a prince and the pope of metaphysicians, before Heereboord declared he is the prince and the pope); ibid., 77. Other names of Suárez were *Doctor Eximinius et Pius* (extraordinary and pious teacher), and *Europae atque adeo orbis universi magister* (teacher of Europe and of the whole world). Cf. José Pereira, "The Achievement of Suárez and the Suárezianization of Thomism." In *Francisco Suárez (1548–1617)*, eds. Adelino Cardoso, António Manuel Martins, and Leonel Ribeiro Dos Santos (Lisboa: Colibri 1998), 133.

had been done for centuries with few exceptions (Avicenna's *Book of Knowledge*, Averroes's short commentary). Instead, it was a thematic approach following organized questions. Although for this reason it is sometimes thought that Suárez wrote the first system of metaphysics, what was more important about it is that the work possessed, above all, excellent didactic values. The basic questions such as the understanding of being, the properties of being, its structure etc., were arranged in proper order, and each question contained a rich palette of positions, arguments, and polemics; this greatly facilitated the study of metaphysics; with the different positions it could give the impression of textbook impartiality.

Suárez's metaphysics was neither a system (especially in the sense we understand today), nor was it a textbook, but it supported a certain philosophical current. This preference was present in key matters, but someone who did not know the medieval authors well might not be aware of it.

Philosophers in the German circle of Protestantism learned metaphysics from Suárez and were influenced by his way of conceiving of metaphysics.[8] Since they were the founders of ontology, without knowing the Suárezian context, it would be difficult to form an opinion about what ontology meant in terms of its source.[9]

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8   It was even said that Suárez had traveled through Germany in a triumphal coach "*El gigante de la Metafísica se pasea pues por las regiones protestantes en esplendida carroza triunfal*" (The giant of metaphysics is driving through protestant lands in a magnificent triumphal carriage). It was thought that the followers of Luther and Calvin had spread Suárezianism from the Tyrol to the Baltic, from the Vistula to the Moselle. Suárez even went to England, mainly due to Scheibler of Giessen, who was called "the Protestant Suárez." What could be said of the Catholic universities? At the beginning of the eighteenth century, there were in all twenty-two universities in Germany, France, and Poland where the followers of Suárez lectured. We must add to this the universities in South America, which were also dominated by Suárezians. In Poland, Jesuits such as Fryderyk Klimka, Tomasz Młodzianowski, and Jan Morawski were regarded as followers of Suárez. To summarize, in history, no one could equal the popularity of Suárez; cf. Joaquin Iriarte, "La proyección sobre Europa de una gran Metafísica o Suárez en la Filosofía de los días del Barroco" [The Projection on Europe of a Large Metaphysics or Philosophy of Suárez in the Baroque Period], in Razón y Fe, *Francisco Suaárez; El hombre, la obra, el influjo* colaboradores de 'Razon y Fe' [Suárez: A Man, Work, and Influence] (Madrid: Editorial Razón y Fe, 1948), 229–263.

9   More and more authors point to the key role of Suárez in the rise of the new ontology; e.g, Johannes B. Lotz, "Ontologie und Metaphysik," *Scholastik* 18 (1943): 1–30; Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952); Jean-François Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique* [Suárez and the System of Metaphysics] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990; Olivia Blanchette. "Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology," *The Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. 209

Where did the new word 'ontology' come from? The Greeks, Romans, and medieval philosophers did not know the term. The word gives the impression of having a Greek origin. Even Immanuel Kant believed this. Kant thought that it was a 'proud' name (*der stolze Name einer Ontologie*; the proud name of an ontology).[10] Meanwhile, it was only one of the many neologisms that abounded in the seventeenth century in philosophy and in the particular sciences. Besides 'ontology,' other words were created in the service of philosophy, such as '*gnoseologia*,' '*ontosophia*,' '*noologia*,' '*archelogia*," *scientia catholica*,' not to mention other neologisms to designate departments of philosophy such as '*angelosophia*,' '*anthroposophia*,' '*aperantologia*,' '*Dianologie*,' '*Phänomenologie*,' and '*Thelematologie*,'[11] Many of these neologisms died a natural death. Others survived, but not in the sense originally intended by their authors.[12] 'Ontology' was one word that survived. Do we know who coined it and what the author had in mind? Until recently there were lively discussions on this matter.

Today, it is generally thought that the main work that contributed to the spread of the word ontology was Christian Wolff's *Philosophia prima sive ontologia* (1729), but one may have reservations about this. It is known for certain that Wolff did not coin the term. Not long ago, it was thought that Johannes Clauberg (as Étienne Gilson thought) coined the term. Clauberg, for his own part, admitted that he did not.[13] It was later said that the term was coined by

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(1999): 3–19. It should be mentioned that Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations* were republished many times in different countries: the first edition was in Salamanca in the year 1597, then in 1599 in Venice, in 1600 in Munster, in 1605 again in Munster, in Venice, Paris, in 1608 in Cologne, in 1610 in Venice, in 1614 two editions in Geneva, one in Cologne, one in Munster, in 1619 in Paris and Venice, in 1620 in Cologne, in 1630 in Munster, and in 1636 in Geneva. That adds up to seventeen editions over thirty-nine years. Among the best known readers, we may mention Descartes, Grotius, Leibniz, Spinoza, Vico, Hume, and Berkeley. cf. Iriarte, "La proyección sobre Europa de una gran Metafísica o Suárez en la Filosofía de los días del Barroco," 236.

10   It is hard to say why the name ontology should be a proud one, and certainly in the English language that adjective in this context does not make much sense. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 247, B 303.

11   José Ferrater Mora, "On the Early History of Ontology," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24 (1963): 36–47.

12   The word 'anthroposophy' initially designated works of philosophy devoted to humanity (Thomas Vaughan, 1650), but at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was taken by Rudolf Steiner to mean occult knowledge about humanity, just as the word 'theosophy' moved from a theological meaning toward occult teaching about divine matters.

13   "It would seem somewhat surprising that Clauberg has been mentioned as the first one who used such words as 'ontologia' and 'ontosophia' with an awareness of their importance and implications, since Clauberg himself recognized in his *Elementa philosophiae*

Rudolf Göckel (Rudolph Goclenius the Elder, 1547–1628), a professor of philosophy at the University of Marburg and the author of works in logic, ethics, and physics, two dictionaries, a philosophical lexicon,[14] and a lexicon of Greek philosophy.[15] In the first lexicon (and only there), we find the word '*ontologia.*' It appeared in the Greek version as '*ontología,*' but not in the Latin translation, for in Latin, its counterpart was '*philosophia de ente*' (philosophy of being).

The word 'ontology' might well have slipped from the attention of historians because Goclenius introduced it in the margin of an entry, not on metaphysics, but on abstraction (*abstractio*), and in a discussion of abstraction from matter (*abstractio materiae*) in the conception of the medieval commentator Alexander of Hales. Goclenius did not append any commentary or explanation to the neologism, as if the word was obvious and well understood. Was Goclenius the actual author of the word?

Not long ago, the work of a forgotten author, Jacob Lorhard (1561–1609) began to receive attention. He used the word '*ontologia*' even earlier, and it appeared in the title of his philosophical treatise.[16] The treatise was *Ogdoas Scholastica continens Diagraphen Typicam atrium: Grammatices (Latinae, Graecae), Logices, Rhetorices, Astronomices, Ethices, Physices, Metaphysices, seu Ontologiae* (1606) [Scholastic eight containing diagraphes of typical arts: Grammar (Latin, Greek), Logics, Rhetorics, Astronomy, Ethics, Physics, Metaphysics or Ontology]. Ontology is included among the eight (*ogdaos*) liberal (scholastic) arts, along with Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric, astronomy, ethics, and physics.[17]

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sive ontosophia, scientia prima, de iis quae Deo creaturisque seu modo communiter attribuntur, published in 1647, that he was not the first one to use them"; ibid., 38.

14   *Lexicon philosophicum, quo tantam clave philosophiae fores aperiuntur* [Philosophical Lexicon, Like a Key that Opens the Doors of Philosophy], 1613.

15   *Lexicon philosophicum Graecum* [Lexicon of Greek Philosophy], 1615.

16   Joseph S. Freedman rediscovered Lorhard when he was preparing a second edition devoted to what was called German scholastic philosophy of the times of the Reformation. *Deutsche Schulphilosophie im Reformationszeitalter (1500–1650): Ein Handbuch für den Hochschulunterricht* [German School Philosophy in the Reformation Era (1500–1650): A Manual for University Education]. 2 vols. (Münster: MAKS Publikationen, 1985); cf. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 410n6.

17   This was, of course, a new conception of the liberal arts, which traditionally consisted in seven: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic (the *trivium*), and arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the *quadrivium*). They served as a preparation for both philosophy and theology. Clauberg left the *trivium* as it was, but from the *quadrivium* only astronomy remained, and the rest is the legacy of the division of philosophy found in the Stoics (ethics, physics), except that instead of dialectics metaphysics is mentioned, which is identified with ontology. All this shows that the knowledge of the history of philosophy was very superficial.

Lorhard identified ontology with metaphysics (*Metaphysices, seu Ontologiae*), but no one knows why the new term appeared. The term appears three times in the work, but without any commentary.

A few years after the first edition of Lorhard's work, it was revised and published under a more general title *Theatrum philosophicum* (Philosophical theater, 1613), and while it is good for a title to be short, the word '*ontologia*' was left out. This was understandable, because Lorhard had broadened the palette of the arts from eight to twelve, and the title would have been too long. The new edition overshadowed the first edition, and Lorhard was no longer associated with ontology. Lorhard himself quickly fell into oblivion.

Did Lorhard influence Goclenius? Although the texts do not directly confirm this, as Goclenius does not cite Lorhard once, it is highly probable. A year after the publication of *Ogdoas Scholastica*, Lorhard, who had been the principal of a gymnasium in St. Gallen for a time, became a professor in Marburg, where Goclenius already worked. It is hard to imagine that the two did not meet and discuss matters of philosophy. It is very likely that Goclenius (in 1613) borrowed the term *ontologia* from Lorhard, who coined the term (in 1606).[18]

The new word 'ontology' did not disappear from philosophy. We find it in a treatise by Abraham Calov (Calovius) called *Metaphysica divina* (1636),[19] where it is identified with '*ontosophia.*' According to Calovius, the word metaphysics concerns the order of things (*a rerum ordine*), that is, the object in itself, while *ontologia* and *ontosophia* concern the object as known by us (*ab objecto proprio*).[20] Calovius here may have seemed to refer to the Aristotelian difference between the mode of being and the mode of cognition, in order to differentiate the object itself, but this is not the case. The point is that when being is acknowledged as the object of metaphysics, it is then more suitable to call it ontology. When we are concerned with the order of things, and so with the hierarchy of beings, then the emphasis falls on what is found beyond the world and nature.

In any case, here, Calovius was looking to Neoplatonism. The Neoplatonic commentators thought that the word '*metà*' referred to Divine Beings that are

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18   Lorhard used the new term interchangeably with the term 'metaphysics or first philosophy' in the context of the views in a book by Clemens Timpler that was very popular at the time, *Metaphysicae systema methodicum* (Steinfurt, 1604), written from the position of Peter Ramus; cf. Marco Lamanna. "Correspondences between Timpler's Work and that of Lorhard."

19   Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 94.

20   "According to Calovius, the *scientia de ente* is called *Metaphysica* in respect to 'the order of things,' *a rerum ordine*, being called (more properly), in respect to the object or subject matter, *ab objecto proprio*," Mora, "On the Early History of Ontology," 45–47.

above the sublunary world. And this is what is rendered by the word 'metaphysics,' while proceeding from our way of knowing things the material world appears first, and only later do we come to know Divine Beings.[21]

Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz appealed not to ontology, but to ontosophy (*Rationalis et realis philosophia* (Rational and real philosophy), 1642). The description of ontosophy indicated features of its objects that were also connected with ontology, which was easy enough since the use of terms was still not strongly established. Caramuel said that *ontosophia* was a science concerning being (*scientia de ente*) that investigates fundamental principles such as the principle of non-contradiction—that two contradictory propositions cannot be true at the same time (I); the principle of the excluded middle—that two contradictory propositions cannot be false at the same time (II); and Ockham's razor—that he who multiplies beings beyond need is proceeding imprudently (XIII). As J. Ferrater Mora remarks, these principles later were called ontological principles.[22] Caramuel did not set his ontosophy in opposition to

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21   Cf. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 29–30.

22   Caramuel seems to be more explicit than Calovius about the nature and function of ontology (or, in his case, ontosophy). According to Caramuel, "*Metaphysica objectum est ens, ideóque Ὀντοσοφία dicitur, quae est ὄντος σοφία seu ENTIS SCIENTIA.*" (Being is the object of Metaphysics, that's why is called Ontosophía, which is science on being). *Rationalis et realis philosophia* [Rational and Realistic Philosophy] (Lovanii : E. De Witte, 1654), 65. This seems to be clear enough, even if Metaphysica is considered to be the same as Ontosophia; what it means is that only as Ontosophy can Metaphysics become a true *prima philosophia*—perhaps without theological commitments. And this is not a mere afterthought (as it seemed to be in the case of Goclenius's usage), for Caramuel goes on to discuss the meaning and merits of Ontosophia, saying, "*periculosè aedificat qui probabilia; stolidé, qui dubbia supponit. Plurimi Idéas Idéis superstruentes Ontosophiam erexête Academiam, quae vel mole sua postmodum corruit nemine arietante*" (One who builds on probable suppositions builds hazardously; one who lays down dubious foundations builds stupidly. Very many people, laying Ideas upon Ideas have built up Ontosophy into an Academy which later collapses even by its own weight with no one butting against it); ibid., 66). He does more than that—something that he seems to be the first to have done; he lays down a set of principles that can be said to be 'ontological' (or 'ontosophical'). We cite four of these principles: "I. *Impossibili est dari duas contradictorias simul veras* (It is impossible to accept two contradictions to be at the same time true). II. *Impossibile est dari duas contradictorias simul falsas* (It is impossible to accept two contradictions to be at the same time false) ... XI. *Omnia quod est, dum est necesse est esse* (Everything what is, if it is necessary, it is) ... XIII. *Impudenter procedit, qui multiplicat Entia absque necessitate* (Impudently proceeds who multiply beings without necessity). It can be seen that such principles have one common characteristic: they are 'general' and at the same time 'universal.' But beyond that they seem to have little in common. Some principles belong to general logic (I, II); some, to modal logic (XI); some are pragmatic rules (XIII). The aim

metaphysics, but it seemed to him that the term ontosophy was more adequate to the object.

Clauberg published a short work, *Elementa philosophiae sive Ontosophia* (Elements of philosophy or Ontosophia, 1647) in which, along with ontology, he used the second neologism, ontosophy, but he made a distinction between ontology and metaphysics. He explained that we need new names, because the name metaphysics does not say clearly what its object is. If the object is being, then ontology or ontosophy are better names, because the word being appears in them directly (*onto-logia*, *onto-sophia*). This was not all, he explained further that being indicates some sort of nature that is common to corporeal and incorporeal beings, to God and creatures, to all beings and to each being.[23] The word 'metaphysics' contains no such reference that would include all beings, because it indicates only the supreme being, that is, God, and the pure intelligences.[24] Such an approach to the difference between ontology and metaphysics is very instructive, because from it we can determine the historical provenance of Clauberg's view. As in the second case, Clauberg follows the Neoplatonic line in his interpretation of the name metaphysics (as *transphysica*), so in the first case it is not difficult to see that he was operating with a theory of being that was a continuation of the views of Avicenna and Scotus, not of Averroes, and especially not of Thomas Aquinas. This is a univocal understanding of being, since the difference in natures between beings, including corporeal and immaterial beings, created beings and Divine Beings,

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of Caramuel, and of all the first 'ontologists,' was apparently to list all the possible general rational principles which they thought could be applied to all reality as such"; Mora, "On the Early History of Ontology, 39.

23   "[*Ontologia*] *est quaedam scientia, quae contemplatur ens quatenus ens est, hoc est, in quantum communem quandam intelligitur habere naturam vel naturae gradum, qui rebus corporeis et incorporeis, Deo et creaturis, omnibusque adeo et singulis entibus suo modo inest*" ([Ontology] is a science which contemplates being as being, it means, it is known as having a common nature or degree of nature, which belongs in a proper way to material and immaterial things, to God and creatures, to all and to individual beings), *Ontosophie* 1.1; quoted in Brosch, *Die Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg* [The Ontology of John Clauberg]. PhD diss, University of Greifswald, 1926, 20.

24   "*Philosophi a rebus physicis ac sensilibus se contulerunt ad res intelligibiles magisque communes et abstractas, quas tà metà tà physiká Aristoteles appellavit, unde effectum nomen Metaphysicae*" (Philosophers from physical and sensuous things move towards intelligible things more common and abstract, which Aristotle called *tà metà tà physicá*, and the effect of this was the name Metaphysics), *Ontosophia*, prolegomena 2; quoted in Brosch, *Die Ontologie*, 6. It is noteworthy that Clauberg attributed the name metaphysics to Aristotle.

is a difference of degree, since otherwise one concept of being could not be created.

How does the understanding of being appear that ontosophy, also called ontology, deals with? Here we find very important analyses. Only now has the word 'ontology' been unambiguously distinguished from metaphysics, and so all the more we should see what Clauberg understood by being.

As it turns out, the Latin word '*ens*' has three meanings in Clauberg's work. It is everything about which one can think (*omne, quod cogitari ac dici potest*), and to which nothing can be opposed, or it is something (*quod Aliquid est*) and that to which nothing is opposed (*cui opponitur nihil*), or it means a thing exists by itself (*vel significant Rem, quae per se existit*).[25] Clauberg's concept of being ends with a being treated as something that exists in itself and independently of the knowing subject. The first two descriptions are different, for they have already been separated from a really existing being. The second description is directed toward possible being, where apart from being as thus conceived is found nothingness. However, the first description designates everything that can be thought or said (*Alles was nur gedacht und gesagt werden kann*).[26] This also opens ontology to the concept of contradictory being.

In this way, the emphasis in ontology is shifted from 'real being' to 'mental being' (*ens cogitabile*). The concept of mental being becomes the main object of ontology. It causes the name 'metaphysics' to be replaced by the name 'ontology.' This is not the end of the matter, for in the framework of Clauberg's ontology there is a still deeper transformation of the object of metaphysics, so deep that one can go no farther: not only that which is possible, but also what is impossible is the object, because the impossible can be thought of and can be spoken of. As a result of this, the possible and the impossible are called being. That which is impossible can be thought of or can be spoken of, yet one can go no farther, because the combined concept of being and non-being in one concept of being exhausts all the possibilities, and indeed all the impossibilities. Here we find ourselves right at the birth of ontology as different from metaphysics, for while being as real is the object of metaphysics, possible and even contradictory being is the object of ontology.

In Clauberg's philosophy, it is clear that it is not a question of exchanging one name for another, but that there is a radical change in how the object itself of metaphysics is understood, and by the same token, how philosophy as such is understood.

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25   Ibid., 20–22.

26   "*omne, quod cogitari ac dici potest*" (all that can be thought or said), ibid., 22.

When the concept of being includes that which is possible, then mathematical objects may be found within the scope of ontology, and when the concept of being contains anything of which one can think or speak (object of thought), then an avenue is opened for the philosophy of language to become the main object of philosophy. Being as thing, or being as word, is the new object of ontology; this object appears in the context of the transformation or reformulation of metaphysics into ontology. Since the object of thought as an object is a being, then ontology no longer needs to resort to the word being, in so far as its proper object is simply an object of our thought. In turn, when nothingness becomes such an object, then ontology can become objectless at the level of thought. Nothingness can be spoken of, but in itself it is only the negation of an object. One way or another, Clauberg not only clearly differentiated between ontology and metaphysics, but he also opened the way for the different versions of ontology that would appear in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Some limit themselves to the object of ontology as possibility, others keep going and include nothingness in this, yet others bring ontology to self-destruction, making ontology an objectless cognition. The seeds of these positions are found in Clauberg, and therefore he should be handed the palm for being first to describe the specific character of ontology as essentially different from metaphysics, although Clauberg did not see this difference at the level of a difference in the understanding of being, but at the level of a difference of objects: God in the case of metaphysics, and being in the case of ontology.

Ontology before Metaphysics: From Wolff to Kant

Clauberg's influence was not initially very strong, although the new words were already used on a daily basis (especially words such as ontosophy and ontology). They were included in textbooks and lexicons. In a lexicon by Stephanus Chauvin (*Lexicon rationale sive Thesaurus philosophicus ordine alphabetic digestus*, 1692), there is even a separate heading for *Ontosophia*, which Chauvin defined as the science concerning being (*sapientia sive scientia entis*); he identified it with ontology (*Aliàs Ontologia, doctrina de ente*). Under the heading *Metaphysica*, Chauvin said that 'ontosophy' is the science concerning being, while 'ontology' is not only the science concerning being, but a methodically developed system. Thus, the concept of a system and of a method whereby a science arise comes into the definition of ontology, while ontosophy designates the science of being with regard to the object. Chauvin explained the word '*logia*' as science, while '*sophía*' had no technical meaning; hence, the emphasis falls more on '*on*'; that is, on the object, being. These were arbitrary decisions from the point of view of the Greek language and the philosophical tradition.

We also find the word 'ontology' in the title of a four-volume work by the Swiss theologian and philosopher Joannis Clericus (1657–1736) called *Opera philosophica in quatuor volumina digesta* (1704). This treatise had a title *Ontologia or about Being in General* (*Ontologia sive de ente in genere*).[1]

Finally, there appeared the work that is best known today in ontology, *Philosophia prima sive ontologia* by Christian Wolff (*First Philosophy or Ontology*, 1729).[2] There, we do not find the word 'metaphysics' at all, and the word 'metaphysician' is used only once (*metaphysicus* § 408).[3] This could suggest that in his philosophy, Wolff generally rejected metaphysics for ontology, but this is not the case. We find the word 'metaphysics' in another work by Wolff (*Philosophia rationalis: Sive Logica*, 1728), which is concerned with logic and was published a year before the *Ontology*. For Wolff, logic performed the role of methodology. Hence, metaphysics appears here in the context of

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1   Cf. Mora, "On the Early History of Ontology."

2   The philosophical context of Wolff's ontology was presented by Bogusław Paź in *Epistemologiczne założenia ontologii Christiana Wolffa* [Epistemological Assumptions of Christian Wolff's Ontology] (Wrocław: University of Wrocław, 2002).

3   Also, the word 'ontosophy' is absent.

an attempt to organize all philosophical domains (and names on occasion as well).

Wolff thought that metaphysics was a superior name for philosophy. The parts of metaphysics or philosophy were ontology (identified with first philosophy), cosmology, psychology, and natural theology.[4] This was regarded as the classical division, the one most representative of scholasticism. This gives an impression that the division is very clear and strongly rooted in tradition, but is that the case?

First of all, metaphysics ceased to mean a philosophical science that had its own proper object. All objects had been parceled out already across every science. Ontology and not metaphysics is the science of being. The word metaphysics points to various departments of philosophy, but metaphysics as such does not have an object of its own. In turn, Aristotle called first philosophy first because it referred to the first being, which is the divine substance. Only in that way can we understand Aristotle's explanation that if there was not such a substance, then physics would be the first philosophy. There is such a substance, and so the science that is concerned with it is first philosophy, and it can also be called theology.[5] Thus, the identification of ontology with first philosophy presupposed a far reaching modification of how metaphysics was to be understood in its original meaning. The emphasis was shifted from the first being (God) to being, and first philosophy was separated from natural theology, while in Aristotle's text, theology appears as the counterpart of first philosophy.

Historical questions were not all that important for Wolff, and he was not all that well acquainted with Aristotle's views. Wolff's division of philosophy

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4   "In *Metaphysica primum locum tuetur Ontologia seu philosophia prima, secundum cosmologia generalis, terium Psychologia & ultimum Theologia naturalis. Partes Metaphysicae eo collocanda sunt ordine, ut praemittantur, unde principia sumunt ceterae.... Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*" (In metaphysics the first place belongs to ontology or first philosophy, the second place to general cosmology, the third one to psychology, and the last to natural theology. The parts of metaphysics are put in order, to allow put first these principles from which other principles are taken). Christian Wolff, *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica, methodo scientifica pertractata et ad usum scientiarum atque vitae aptata* [Rational Philosophy or Logic Investigated and Useful for Science and Life], 1740; reprinted as *Christiani Wolfii Philosophia rationalis sive logica* [Christian Wolff's Rational Philosophy or Logic], 3 vols., 3rd rev. ed., ed. Jean Ecole (Hildesheim, New York: G. Olms, 1983), Abteilung II, Band. 1.1. para. 99. Despite everything, it is strange that we do not find such a division in the *Ontology* itself.

5   "if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to this to consider being qua being-both what it is and the attributes which belong to it qua being." Aristot., *Met.* 6.1, 1026a 28–32.

would be influential later, just as the division proposed by the Stoics had been influential earlier.[6]

The difference between Wolff and Aristotle is even clearer when we ask about the most important matter: what really is the object of ontology? Here Wolff followed the second way of understanding being proposed by Clauberg: "*quoniam illud existere potest, quod possibile est, quod possibile est, ens est*" (that can exist which is possible, and that which is possible is a being).[7] At that moment, Wolff was clearly supporting ontology as the science concerning possible being. That understanding of ontology would push metaphysics as the science concerning real being into the background. If new positions appeared here, they would concern not metaphysics as classically conceived, but would concern ontology; in which questions concerning how its object is understood appear: possible being or the concept of possible being, possible being or that which is thinkable, possible being or an object, an object or an act without the quality of representation, etc. These issues would be strictly ontological and are taken up in isolation from classical metaphysics. For the ontologists of that time, the problem seemed not to exist, because they were convinced that they were working in metaphysics.

As an example, consider Wolff's student, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Although Baumgarten resorted to the word metaphysics in the title of one of his works (*Metaphysica*, 1793), in keeping with his master's spirit, he explained that metaphysics included ontology, cosmology, and psychology (*ad metaphysicam referuntur ontologia, cosmologia, psychologia, et theologia naturalis*).[8] When he defined metaphysics, he identified it with 'general metaphysics,' 'architectonics,' and 'first philosophy.' Did metaphysics possess a different object than did ontology? It did not, and so we turn to ontology as the most important domain of philosophy or metaphysics.

The terminology was constantly shifting. Baumgarten, unlike Wolff, did not consistently treat metaphysics as superior to ontology, but sometimes regarded metaphysics as being of equal rank; he joined together several other

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6   Wolff's influence on how philosophy, including metaphysics and ontology, was understood especially in German university circles, stems from the fact that in the year 1735, around twelve professors were his supporters. Moreover, the textbook on logic in German that Wolff wrote for gymnasia and universities had over fourteen editions during his life time, and five of those editions sold 8,000 copies each, an astronomic number for those times; cf. Roberto Poli, "Twardowski and Wolff." In *Theory of Objects: Meinong and Twardowski*, ed. J. Paśniczek (Lublin, Wydawnictwo. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1992), 46.

7   Wolff, *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia*, §135; cf. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 114. Wolff knew Clauberg's work and cited it more than once in his *Ontology*.

8   Alexander G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, Ontologia Pars 1.4.

definitions or descriptions that were known earlier, along with some neologisms: *ontology*, *ontosophy*, *metaphysics*, *general metaphysics*, and *architectonics*. First philosophy is the science concerning the properties of being, as being is most generally apprehended.[9] This raises the question whether it is a matter of real being, or possible being, or even of merely 'thought-of' being. In this respect, Baumgarten fit into the circle of his German predecessors, for even if he spoke about being, he was thinking of possible being. For him nothing or nothingness was that which was impossible, and the impossible was that which was contradictory. Ontology had possible being as its object.[10] We see how from the time ontology arose, two positions polarized in the question of the object of ontology: the object is either possible being, or thought-of being. Possible being must be at the least non-contradictory, while thought-of being can be contradictory, for after all, contradictions can be thought of. Real being consequently receded to the background.[11]

How then did Kant see the problem of ontology and metaphysics? Kant did not make any thorough historical studies. His education in that matter was based primarily on the works of Wolff and Baumgarten.[12] The word metaphysics appears in his work more often than does the word ontology, but in the schematic for the division of the philosophical sciences, we find that which is found in Wolff's *Logic*. For his part, Kant also expounded on the meaning of metaphysics as a system, just as Chauvin had done earlier.

Thus, we read in the *Critique of the Pure Reason* that 'metaphysics' is a better name, because it designates a system that includes ontology, rational physiology, rational cosmology, and rational theology.[13] Ontology is a part of

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9   "*Ontologia* (*ontosophia, metaphysica, metaphysica universalis, architectonica, philosophia prima,*) *est scientia praedicatorum entis generaliorum*" (Ontology (ontosophy, metaphysics, universal metaphysics, architectonics, first philosophy) is a science of the general predicates of being); ibid.; cf. Mario Casula, *La metafisica di A.G. Baumgarten* [Metaphysics of A.G. Baumgarten] (Milan: University of Mursia, 1973), 91–74, 105–107.

10   Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, Ontologia Pars 1.8.

11   It is still worth noting that after Baumgarten, the terminology still did not become established. One example is that a less known author, Antonio Genovesi, returns to the word "ontosophy" to mean the first division of metaphysics; *Elementa metaphysicae mathematicum in morem adornata. Pars prior. Ontosophia* [Elements of Metaphysics Provided in a Mathematical Way. Part One], 1743. And so, it is not ontology as in the case of Wolff, but ontosophy that is the main division of metaphysics, although here it is only a question of terminology.

12   Kant drew primarily on Baumgarten's *Metaphyisics*; cf. Giovanni Ferretti, *Ontologia e teologia in Kant* [Ontology and Theology in Kant] (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1997), 39.

13   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 846–847.

metaphysics, while metaphysics is a system, that is, a whole that includes on-tology and the so-called particular metaphysics that Wolff and Baumgarten mentioned.

It was a genuine innovation when Kant described the foundations of metaphysical cognition. In this matter he did not ponder being or the concept of being, but he was interested in the specific character of metaphysical cognition. He saw it in human beings' natural disposition to cross over the boundaries of experience and to gather knowledge of the reality that is beyond experience. According to Kant, such an attitude has a metaphysical character. In that attitude there is, on the one hand, a desire to know everything, and not merely to know what we apprehend in sense cognition. On the other hand, it is here a matter of reaching what is above the sensual and has a divine dimension. Kant discovered such a metaphysics in human nature.[14]

We see at once that this is a different *conception of human nature* from that of Aristotle, who at the beginning of Book A of his *Metaphysics* remarked in a general way on the human desire to know, both with sensory and intel-lectual knowledge; this shows that knowledge is precious in itself, and that by nature, when human beings seek to understand, they are seeking causes. This way of thinking is most in tune with common sense, and Aristotle pro-vided examples for this purpose.[15] Meanwhile, Kant situated the problem in the context of certain philosophical discussions where the key thing was not the concept of knowledge (or various types of knowledge), but experience (*Empfindung*). Also, this experience was entangled in a certain philosophical conception of experience. Hence, in order to develop the problem further and to define what metaphysics is, one must explain what is understood by the term 'experience.' This is a conception of knowledge inherited in turn from the British empiricists, who were concerned with discovering scientifically valid cognition. On the one hand, we have experience in a restricted conception as the only realm of science. On the other hand, we have metaphysics as a theory that reaches beings above the senses, for after all Kant spoke of God, angels, and pure intelligences. Here again we can see the influence of a Neoplatonic interpretation of the meaning of the word metaphysics, for it is not a science about being, but *transphysica*.

We should remark here that these substances above the senses do not appear accidentally in Aristotle's metaphysics or in Neoplatonism. They appear in the context of an attempt to provide a rational explanation of the world that is

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14   Ferretti, *Ontologia e teologia in Kant*, 40.

15   For example, we draw pleasure from sensory impressions (we like to look) whether or not it brings us any benefit.

directly accessible to us in sensory and intellectual cognition. When Aristotle spoke of immaterial substances, it was not because in some way he went outside of experience, but because of causality, because causality implied rationality. It is not enough to experience something. We still want to understand what we experience, and we seek causes for the sake of understanding. Hence there appear causes that we do not experience, but which we can understand, and it is above all in the light of these that we understand the reality that surrounds us and that we experience. The passage to beings 'above the senses' occurred in traditional metaphysics not out of a desire to go beyond experience, but because the world that we know does not explain itself; it does not have in it a reason for its being or a reason for its motion.

Kant had doubts because in his system causality ceased to perform a cognitive and explanatory role, but became a subjective a priori category. This, in connection with the synthetic (a priori) conception of experience, did not in any way allow one to go to a world above the senses in a scientific way. Here we are dealing with a complete shift of concepts both at the level of metaphysics as such, and epistemology. In this radical perspective, the conception of metaphysics had to change, if indeed it could be called metaphysics after the change.

We should note clearly that Kant's conception of what is metaphysical diverged far from its classical sources. On the one hand Kant had a picture of metaphysics as a speculative and deductive system, a system thus formed after the model of mathematical systems. On the other hand, the concept of experience became binding. It is interesting that the concept of experience, which was a key to science, did not have to be actual, because it was sufficient if it would be possible. Possible experience goes beyond actual experience, and in this sense it is found beyond experience. In the case of a metaphysical system it would have to be included in the system, so if it is not actual experience, then in such a case it will be at least possible.[16] The only problem is that in this case we face the problem of moving from the possible to actual. The mere possibility of experience does not say anything about its actuality, nor does it indicate what feature makes experience not merely possible, but actual. The question is whether the Kantian concept of experience could be open to metaphysical knowledge that comprehends all being, or whether as experience it was too narrow to have metaphysical value. It would not be enough to extend it with possibility in order to include being qua being.

Kant treated the system of metaphysics as dogmatic. It was a system, because Kant took the concept of what is systematic as an essential criterion

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16   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A110–A114.

for science, and so if metaphysics were to be a science, it would have to be a system. The only problem is the status of the first premises or assumptions. They are accepted as a starting point without experience, and they become a special *qui pro quo*, because when he criticized metaphysics, he was criticizing only the model of metaphysics familiar to him, the one he learned from Wolff and Baumgarten. This current, as we have noted, is situated in the framework of the German school of metaphysics. However, neither Aristotle's metaphysics nor that of Thomas is a system in that sense, and so they cannot be charged with dogmatism. If we call the philosophies of either class 'systems,' then we do so in a completely different sense than in the case of Wolff or Baumgarten.[17] Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics was only a critique of a selected current of metaphysics.

Kant also conceived of metaphysics as a critical science that investigated the a priori concepts and principles of reason at the level of nature and the level of customs.[18] So here it is a question of recognizing the a priori conditions and of doing so with reference to nature and morality, but not with reference to being qua being. This was the metaphysics that Kant proposed and developed. Nonetheless, we might ask why such a philosophy would be called metaphysics if its object was not being, or even the concept of being. Perhaps it is merely because the fundamental concepts or categories that traditionally belonged to metaphysics were subjected to critical analysis in which the realism of metaphysical cognition was completely upset. In such a case, it would not be metaphysics, but anti-metaphysics. It would be a science concerning metaphysics where the concept of science had its own explicitly Kantian connotation. This was analysis in the sense of a 'dismantling' of concepts in order to draw from them subjective a priori categories.

Moreover, the sphere of cognition in which we seek those categories was restricted to nature and morality. This means that here Kant was looking to the Stoic division of philosophy into physics, logic, and ethics. Just as the Stoics regarded these domains as the whole of philosophy in an objective sense, and as a result that which was metaphysical referred to God, the *Logos* who permeated the entire cosmos, so Kant found this *Logos* not in God but in the human cognitive faculties and morality. This is an almost divine permeation, because by means of the a priori categories it constitutes its own objects, the

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17   Andrzej Maryniarczyk wrote at greater length on the difference between classical philosophy as a system, and contemporary systems in *System metafizyki: Analiza 'przedmiotowo-zbornego' poznania* [System of Metaphyiscs: An Analysis of 'Objective-Carrying' Knowledge] (Lublin: Red. Wydawnictw KUL, 1991).

18   Cf. Ferretti, *Ontologia e teologia in Kant*, 39–42.

world and morality, as the objects of knowledge. Metaphysics in that conception as a critique of knowledge was, de facto, a substitute for theology.

When Kant raised objections to ontology he always had in mind the philosophy of Wolff and Baumgarten. He criticized ontology, as he wrote, for claiming "to itself the right to providing a priori synthetic [acts of] cognition of things in general under the form of a systematic doctrine."[19] So Kant undermined the status of ontology as a universal science (*scientia universalis*), that is, a science whose assertions are universally true. He thought that universal assertions had an a priori character, and so they did not come from experience (they were not a posteriori) and they concerned things in general, that is, things of any sort whatsoever. He criticized that sort of approach (or claim). Ontology did not provide universally valid knowledge. Why not? It did not go beyond experience. For Kant, the crucial matter was the constant construction of each science, including ontology, upon experience. In this case it was a question of the sort of experience that provides universally valid knowledge. This was not only actual experience, but possible experience as well. Kant was more concerned with finding the foundations for universally valid a priori synthetic assertions than with saving metaphysics or ontology, and their respective objects—being and the concept of being. For this reason he searched for a radically new reference point to provide such foundations.

Here it turns out that the human subject, whose faculties together constitute the known object, contains such foundations. Being or the concept of being recedes to the background, while the concept of the object—anything that can be thought of, including contradictions and nothingness—comes to center stage. What is important is that which is in the field of our cognition as cognition regardless of whether it is real. The concept of the object was raised above the concept of being (it included the possible), and it was raised even above the concept of non-being (it included contradiction), because every being and non-being were thought by us. Kant did not need to somehow stretch the concept of being as Clauberg had done before him when he had included non-beings within the scope of being, which must have sounded paradoxical, because if that which can be thought were being, and nothingness could be thought of, then by the same token, nothingness would also become being. For Kant, the concept of the object became more important than the concept of being. In this case the concept of *being in general* or *thing in general*, and so the fundamental ontological descriptions, were replaced by *object in general* (*Gegenstand überhaupt*). There was an argument for this exchange, because it described a clear break from the tradition of metaphysics for which being

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19   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A247.

had been the chief reference point, despite various perturbations, including ontological perturbations. Here, the concept of being was eliminated though, and its place was taken by the object. The object was only a correlate of knowledge. At that moment, the Cartesian revolution reached its climax: the object replaced not only being, it replaced the idea. First philosophy would be built on the basis of the object.

Kant's transcendental philosophy had universal aspirations, but it was not connected with the old metaphysical tradition (which Kant was not very familiar with); it referred to a certain new current of the old metaphysics, which was more and more often called ontology. In that ontology, Kant saw important shortcomings (and not without reason) that forced him to abandon it, but he did not abandon philosophy, which was striving to formulate generally valid assertions. Whereas in the classical tradition, generally valid assertions or truths grew from reality (as the first principles of being), here they became the property of the object. Kant built universalism not on the concept of being (understood in one way or another), but on what more clearly showed its origin from the thinking subject—the object.

Kant not only criticized the grounds of ontology's universalistic claims, because he also argued against the presence in ontology of assertions concerning God, but in particular he criticized the so-called proofs for God's existence.[20] For the same reason, ontology was definitively deprived of what in metaphysics was the reason for understanding being and which in various ways directed the attention of philosophers toward the Absolute. Kant broke that tradition.[21] Although Kant's critique, strictly speaking, concerned a specific ontology, and not metaphysics in its historical forms, his critique was treated as if its scope was anti-metaphysical. This had far reaching consequences. The question of existence and the nature of God was eliminated from ontology (metaphysics). In this way ontology was liberated as it were, from its connections with theology. On the other hand, the ontologies (systems of metaphysics) in which philosophers had, historically speaking, considered God, are treated today like onto-theologies, insofar as Kant's critique is considered to be valid. Ontology without theology becomes the fundamental paradigm for understanding metaphysics; and according to it different types of metaphysics and ontology are defined.

The Kantian elimination of theology from ontology meant the elimination of the theological questions from the scope of rational theoretical knowledge.

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20   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A584–A630.

21   "*Kant è stato per un verso critico della via 'ontologica' alla teologia*" (Kant was critical of the ontological way to theology); cf. Ferretti, *Ontologia e teologia in Kant*, 16.

At the theoretical level, this opened the way for atheism or agnosticism. But if God is restored, then God is restored in other acts of cognition or acts of the will, just not at the theoretical level.

As we know, ethics has a sort of loophole that provides an opening for human beings to God. Ethics was also supposed to restore metaphysics. By treating ethics in this way as first philosophy, Kant was coming close to the view of the Stoics for whom ethics was the most important domain of philosophy, and this was the first time this had happened.[22] By this understanding, theoretical cognition and *theoría* as a domain of culture were devalued. Just as 'object-ology' was ultimately supposed to replace ontology, so ethics was supposed to replace natural theology. Ethics was also supposed to help in transcending phenomenalism by providing knowledge about things in themselves, and this in turn was supposed to provide the foundations for the reconstruction of metaphysics.

These various philosophical and metaphysical projects of Kant would become an inspiration for later generations of thinkers strongly influenced by him. Kant's direct successors in German idealism would give one more verdict on metaphysics and ontology. As far as Hegel was concerned, metaphysics and ontology belonged to the past.[23]

The first phase of the introduction of the word ontology to philosophical language closed with Kant. We may say that the word from the time it arose to the second half of the eighteenth century did not enjoy any special privilege, and it was not used in contradistinction to metaphysics. Either both terms were used interchangeably, or one of them was major (metaphysics) and the other was minor (ontology). Thus, the neologisms arose, but because they were used in such a fluid manner, we do not know precisely why they were introduced.

Moreover, ontology is merely an internal affair of German philosophy, in particular of school metaphysics (*Schulmetaphysik*). It has no echo in British or in French philosophy. Why is this? It was probably because German philosophy was cultivated in Protestant universities where there was a fixed curriculum in which metaphysics was an essential part, while British and French philosophy had become independent of university curricula to go their own way. In those milieus the main reason people were interested in philosophy was not to defend the faith and engage in polemics between the Reformation and Counter-reformation, but to chart out 'new directions for the development of humanity' (Francis Bacon), and metaphysics seemed less and less necessary for that purpose.

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22   I wrote about this in *Science in Culture*, 53–65.

23   Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Introduction to first edition.

The concept of ontology crystallized in the very specific setting of German school metaphysics, and it took its philosophical foundations from Francis Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae*. When we look at the index of Wolff's *Ontology*, we see that Suárez's name appears more than twenty times. In fact the number should be greater, because for Wolff, Suárez's position was an expression of the scholastic approach. Hence, when Wolff said that the scholastics had said something, he had Suárez in mind, because the scholastics did not have a single unified position. If by scholastics we understand medieval philosophers, they were diametrically opposed in many points; hence, it is difficult to accept an appeal to scholasticism in the sense of one common position. Notably, Wolff and other German 'metaphysicians' did not delve deeper and ask which philosopher was closest to Suárez. Despite his various vacillations, Suárez ultimately leaned toward Scotus in many key points. Wolff knew Scotus by name and even mentioned him in his *Ontology*, but only once and that was in the index, because in the text he was writing about Scholasticism, he was writing about 'thisness' (*haecceitas*). Thomas Aquinas is not mentioned even once by name.[24]

In order to answer the question of what sort of influence Scotus had in the establishment of modern ontology, we should state that he had a very strong influence but it was indirect. Suárez had a direct influence. Suárez himself was directly influenced by Scotus's positions on many questions that later contributed to the division of ontology from metaphysics and from theology. Scotus's division of being into finite being and infinite being was a division of being that facilitates the introduction of the division of the sciences in which general metaphysics and particular metaphysics would appear. While for Scotus, the meaning of the cultivation of metaphysics was mainly connected with a desire to know about God, in ontology we are dealing with the elimination of God, since God has been moved to theology. To summarize, if it is a question of God, then ontology is neither metaphysics in the Aristotelian sense (God must be present as the first cause), or in the Scotist sense, because Scotus's concept of being included God as infinite being, while ontology without denying God definitely weakened God's place in the entire system.

When there is talk about the object of ontology, the emphasis is shifted from being to the concept of being. Scotus explicitly conceived of the matter in this way when he said that metaphysics as a human mode of knowledge had to appeal to the concept of being.[25] Consequently, from the object of metaphysics

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24   Wolff, *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia*, 228.

25   Edward Iwo Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota* [Univocity of transcendental metaphysics of John Duns Scotus] (Lublin: Red. Wydawnictw KUL, 1988), 64.

thus described, existence apprehended as the act of being that we know, not in a concept but in a judgment, must drop away. If the concept of being is the major object of metaphysics as ontology, then such an object cannot possess an act of existence. The status of existence changes to become a modality of a concept or of an essence. For this reason it can be conceptually defined because it fits, as it were, in the same category.[26]

When the concept of being occupies the place of being, the concept is no longer connected with existence as an act, and so it can refer to what is possible and to what someone can think of. But a thought-of being is not merely thought of, because it is also real. Why is this so? It has a real essence, and a real essence does not need actually to exist. In this way ontology arrives at the famous third natures that were accepted by Avicenna and Scotus. By contrast, in the modern ontologies, the concept of being and the concept of essence have a purely ontological character, and so they do not have a metaphysical character (in an Aristotelian sense, or in the later Thomistic sense), and they do not have a theological character. For Scotus the question had a theological character; it was a question of an essence that God could make, while its existence cognitively introduced nothing to God himself. Suárez would go a step further and say that even God is not necessary here, because essences have their own necessary features simply as essences.

Being as thought-of can come into existence by God's omnipotence, and contradiction is the limit of God's omnipotence. Non-contradiction is sufficient for reality. Some ontologists went further than Scotus or Suárez. As soon as the concept of being became the object of ontology, and the concept qua concept is an act of the human mind, then ontology could cover what is actually real, what is possible, and what is impossible. In effect, ontology became a science concerning being and non-being. Ontologies overstepped the boundary that Scotus had set: the boundary was non-contradiction revealed in the broadest layer of being. Ontology entered the realm of contradiction. If the emphasis is on contradiction, then contradiction is impossible, but if the emphasis is on the concept, then the concept becomes possible, because a concept as an act of human thinking may refer to, or think about contradiction.

To summarize, Scotus opened the way for ontology, because philosophers who belonged to German School of metaphysics (*Schulmetaphysik*) looked to many of Scotus's positions through Suárez. Their conclusions definitely went beyond the framework of Scotus's philosophy, but Scotus's positions were an important reference point.

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26   For Wolff, existence is only a completion of possibility, not an act: "Hinc Existentiam definio per complementum possibilitatis" (I define existence as completion of possibility), *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia*, 174.

Scotus's philosophy had an enormous influence on the direction in which modern and recent metaphysics and ontology developed. Nonetheless, his role has not been sufficiently expounded upon by the founders of ontology, because their knowledge of scholastic philosophy did not extend to primary sources, and they were unaware that when they repeated current definitions of being, essence, nature, and existence, they were repeating a Suárezian version of the views of Scotus. Today as well, considering the deformed picture of the history of philosophy, the extent to which modern philosophy is dependent upon medieval philosophy has been trivialized or even despised in order to create a myth of a new beginning and a break from the past. Gilson showed in his classical treatise on Descartes that this is a mistake. It is an even bigger mistake to relegate German school metaphysics to the shadows as dependent on Suárez and Scotus; ontology arose within German school metaphysics, and accordingly ontology in the nineteenth and twentieth century began to re-place metaphysics, essentially different from ontology, but almost completely unknown. That type of metaphysics, as distinct from ontology, has as its object being and not a concept of being, being constituted by the act of existence, and not a thought-of non-contradiction or contradiction, real being and not possible being. If we look at the metaphysical controversy between Scotus and Thomas from a historical perspective, the controversy developed in one direction to the benefit of Scotus, and it permeated many currents of contemporary philosophy and ontology, often without being noticed.[27] Although Scotus would certainly have disagreed with many consequent positions that arose out of his own philosophical views, there are too many points of contact for his influence to be denied.

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27   The 'Suárezianism' of philosophy also affected Thomism, since as Gilson remarks: "In short, Suárezianism has consumed Thomism," Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 118; cf. Pereira, "The Achievement of Suárez and the Suárezianization of Thomism," 145–149.

Logic as Ontology: Hegel

When we read Hegel, the situation of metaphysics and of ontology look like a landscape after a battle. In 1812, Hegel wrote that in little more than twenty years (since the early 1790s) philosophical thought had been completely transfigured. As a result, "what was called metaphysics before that period was, so to speak, utterly destroyed and no longer exists as a science."[1] To believe Hegel, the longest period in the history of philosophy had come to an end. Sentence had been passed on metaphysics, which underlay philosophy and science; metaphysics had fallen outside the orbit of rational thought and outside of science. As he said bluntly, in a way that appealed to general readers, and indeed in an ideological spirit, metaphysics had been 'utterly destroyed.' This diagnosis was very harsh and pitiless. Since human judgments, even those of a great philosopher, are often fragile, it is worthwhile asking out of pure curiosity what the German philosopher understood by metaphysics, and what sort of metaphysics he had in mind.

We will let Hegel speak for himself. Almost rhetorically Hegel asks:

> Where today can we still hear, or rather, where today can the voices of the old ontology, rational psychology, cosmology, or even the old natural theology still be heard? Who could still be interested by inquiries concerning, for example, the immateriality of the soul or mechanical and final causes?[2]

Clearly, Hegel had in mind metaphysics as it was cultivated in the style of Christian Wolff; hence, he also mentioned the particular divisions of metaphysics: ontology, rational psychology, cosmology, and natural theology. He also regarded it as anachronistic to raise such academic questions as the immateriality of the soul or to seek causes, in particular the mechanical and final cause.

This diagnosis means that Hegel thought that modern metaphysics had run its course, and Kant's Copernican revolution could not help to rescue it. As it turned out, metaphysics had come to an end but ontology had not. A new

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1 Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, transl. George di Giovanni (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

2 Ibid.

concept of ontology arose with Hegel, grounded not on metaphysics (as in German scholastic philosophy); it arose not in ethics (as in Kant) but in logic. For that reason, Hegel's renowned work, *The Science of Logic*,[3] was not an exposition of the syllogism, but a treatise on the *Science of Being*. Hegel explains:

> Objective logic in this way to a greater extent occupies the place of the old *metaphysics*, i.e., its scientific superstructure over the world, which would be raised only with the help of *thought*. If we take as our starting point the final form in which that science was shaped, then the domain whose place is occupied by objective logic is, first, directly *ontology*—the division of the old metaphysics, which had the task of investigating the nature of *ens* in general; *ens* includes both being and essence…. Objective logic next includes all the rest of metaphysics insofar as the latter tried with the help of pure forms of thinking to apprehend the particular substrata derived from imagination: the soul, the world, God.[4]

Here we find a very synthetic expression of Hegel's conception of metaphysics and ontology, and we can see how much he knew about the topic. The description of the earlier metaphysics as a 'scientific superstructure upon the world' raised by thought is especially interesting. The metaphor of a superstructure (*Gebaüde*), which would later appear in Marxism as something that included all culture, was supposed to suggest that metaphysics was some sort of intellectual reflection on the entire world, or that the world was the foundation upon which metaphysics was built. In the second case, metaphysics did not learn about the world, but it started from the world such as it was given and built another world. The problem with this is that the metaphors could be interpreted in both directions. What, then, does the text mean? Hegel was lamenting that metaphysics was a work of reason, because 'it was raised by thought alone.' We cannot avoid asking how metaphysics arose, if it was simply philosophy that has been situated in the realm of theoretical knowledge, or human thinking. Theoretical knowledge is human thought that wants to know about reality, and does not seek to create reality.

If this objection applies to modern metaphysics, then if it were a superstructure, it would not be built upon the real world, but upon possible worlds, since for modern metaphysics the starting point was the concept of possible being, and from the concept of possible being there is no passage to the real

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3 Published in German as *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 3 vols., 1812, 1813, and 1816, with a revised Book One published in 1831.
4 Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 47.

world. Perhaps the concept of reality has been completely stripped of value, but then why should we use the word metaphysics?[5]

In fact, Hegel was saying that metaphysics somehow evolved into ontology (and the old metaphysics was called ontology). On the other hand, when Hegel described the object of ontology he spoke of being and essence, but he did not make a distinction between a being and the concept of being, or between a real being and a possible being. Everything was called being (*ens*). It is no wonder that such undifferentiated being could become the object of logic, because in logic we are basically concerned with thought. Thought, the object of logic, can include or encompass the objects of the particular metaphysics, psychology, cosmology, and theology, because it is a question of particular forms of thinking. However, we do not know why the concepts of the soul and God, and so the concept of what is essentially immaterial, was supposed to be derived from the imagination, which apprehends that which is sensible and material.

One way or another, Hegel thought that he had to move beyond metaphysics and beyond ontology. Logic was the last incarnation of the science of being qua being because logic studied the necessary forms of thinking that constituted reality.[6] Logic also studied the concept that included all reality. When logic studied the pure forms, up to the ideas, it unveiled divinity as God saw himself in his eternal essence before the creation of the world and infinite spirits. God was the only true being, the being that knows himself. God is indestructible and is the entire truth. Logic, in this conception, is the supreme theology and it is ontology.[7]

This was at the same time the consistent end of ontology as the classical version of metaphysics. As Kant had passed sentence on metaphysics, Hegel passed sentence on ontology. Now logic became first philosophy because it revealed true being and the true God; God is the absolute concept and the absolute idea. The infinite idea and concept is the true being. It is reality. Therefore, the science that studies this idea has first place, and this science is logic. Logic studies pure essences, and it is objective logic.[8]

Even if Kant and Hegel had not condemned metaphysics and ontology to death, since philosophers were still intrigued with metaphysics and ontology,

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5 Hegel's knowledge of medieval philosophy was very weak, and so his understanding of metaphysics had to be based on modern conceptions; cf. André Doz, *La logique de Hegel et les problèmes traditionnels de l'ontologie* [Hegel's Logic and the Traditional Problems of Ontology] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1987), 34.

6 Ibid., 13.

7 Ibid., 22–23.

8 Ibid., 24, 29.

although those topics would continue to appear in the main current of Western philosophy, they would be a different metaphysics and different ontology. When ontology was reanimated after Hegel, it would have a different profile. The new ontology would deliberately cut off its connections with metaphysics and would no longer concern itself with being qua being, or with the concept of being. The definitive reference for the new ontology was logic and mathematics, which trumpeted their triumphs. Instead of speculating on being *qua* being, ontology turned its attention to the object (i.e., anything of which one can think or speak). The object as such became the object of ontology. Ontology wanted to move on its own track without being burdened by the past and by controversies over metaphysics. Metaphysics was no longer the definitive reference point. Metaphysics would seek a place for itself not by looking to classical metaphysics, but by exploring the experiences of the human subject, and special metaphysical importance would be ascribed to those experiences.

The Apotheosis of Mathematics: Bolzano, Frege, and Meinong

When the object of ontology evolved from being to the concept of being, and then evolved from the concept of being to the object (object of thought), then it seems that ontology itself, at least as it had been understood up to that time, would become useless. Hegel had admitted that the ontological issues would be absorbed by logic, but he understood logic in his own special way, in terms of a metaphysical system.

More or less at the same time, another approach to the problem appeared. However, this new approach became influential somewhat later. Bernard Bolzano referred to ontology in the context of his own theory of science and the philosophy of mathematics. He was directly engaged in polemics with Kant, not with Hegel.

According to Kant, the objects of mathematics are the results of a synthesis in which the human cognitive powers were involved, especially the imagination, which worked the a priori categories of time and space. Time and space belong to the field of mathematics. The necessity and universality of the statements of mathematics result from the fact that those categories of the imagination have a necessary status. Bolzano thought that the human faculties of knowledge were not involved in the constitution of the objects of mathematics. At the same time, Bolzano thought that objects of mathematics were not real in the same sense that the world around us is real. The objects of mathematics are also not states of our mind. Accordingly, we can ask, what are they?

Bolzano's response was based on a distinction between three aspects of the objects of mathematics when those objects are treated as things in themselves. They are assertions in themselves (*Satzen an sich*), representations in themselves (*Vorstellungen an sich*), and truths in themselves (*Wahrheiten an sich*). Assertions in themselves concern the meaning of the assertions, and not only the formal aspect. Representations in themselves can be regarded as a kind of idea.[1] Truths in themselves are assertions in themselves that are true.[2]

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1   T. Kotarbiński, Introduction to *Paradoksy nieskończoności* [Paradoxes of Infinity], trans./ed. Łucja Pakalska, Tadeusz Czeżowski, and Tadeusz Kotarbiński (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1966).

2   Franco Voltaggio, *Bernard Bolzano e la dottrina della scienza* [Bernard Bolzano and the Conception of Science] (Milan: Edizione di Comunità, 1974), 252–255.

Bolzano encountered a problem that had bothered philosophers at least since Plato's time, when philosophers had begun to ponder the specific object of scientific knowledge. The object of scientific knowledge was supposed to be constant and unchanging, and this is seen in particular in the case of mathematical objects. Concrete individual beings do not have those features; they can be destroyed or change, and concrete beings are not dependent on our mental states. Platonism in turn seemed to be capable of offering a satisfactory solution: constant and necessary ideas are the objects of scientific knowledge. In Bolzano's case it was not a question of concepts, but of assertions; the meaning of an assertion (unlike the meaning of a name) is called a judgment. In mathematics and in logic, judgments are necessary and unchanging. As such, then, judgments are true; that is, a judgment is a truth in itself. That raises the question, where are judgments found?

The answer to this question can have a theological, metaphysical, or ontological dimension. We are mentioning Bolzano's ontology precisely because it departed from theology and from metaphysics, but it departed from those domains to the extent that those domains were known to Bolzano.[3]

In classical metaphysics, 'truth' means the agreement of a thing with an intellect. First of all, in terms of origin, the thing agrees with the intellect of the Creator. Second, the thing agrees with the intellect of a human being who knows. Bolzano rejected the position that God knows all truths because God created them. Bolzano thought that indeed God knows all truths, but he did not think that God had created them. He thought that truths were already there.

For Bolzano, a point of departure is not the real world, but mathematical objects, or to put it more precisely, true mathematical assertions. They are, as it were, an indisputable fact that acquires ontological autonomy in the course of explanation with respect to the world around us and in theological and metaphysical terms in relation to God.

Bolzano was not very familiar with medieval philosophy. He did not know that Avicenna had come to similar conclusions. Although Avicenna did not

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3 Bolzano defined metaphysics in a Kantian manner, but in the context of mathematics. Metaphysics is the science that demonstrates the true being of certain objects from a priori concepts, or which seeks answers to the question: what sort of objects are real in a necessary manner, or what sort concern the absolute necessity of objects? (*Metaphysik ist jene Wissenschaft, welche sich mit dem Geschäfte befasst, das wirkliche Dasein gewisser Gegenstände aus apriorischen Begriffen zu beweisen—oder—welche sich mit der Frage beschäftigt: welche Dinge sind wirklich und zwar mit Notwendigkeit wirklich—oder—welche handelt von der absoluten Notwendigkeit der Dinge*); from *Beiträge zu einer begründeteren Darstellung der Mathematik* [Contributions to a reasoned view of Mathematics] (Prague, 1810), 13–14; quoted in *Bernard Bolzano 1781–1848. Studien und Quellen* [Studies and Sources] (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), 238.

speak of assertions in themselves, he still spoke of essences in themselves. An essence in itself was a 'third nature' (*natura tertia*), and a third nature was neither individual nor general, but it was independent of God. In Bolzano's case, it was not a question of ideas but of judgments, chiefly mathematical judgments, and they possessed the same ontological status as Avicenna's third natures.

Although it took some time, philosophers who were mainly opposed to psychologism recognized Bolzano's position.[4] Kazimierz Twardowski and Edmund Husserl were his chief supporters in this. They built their theory of intentionality and theory of the object upon his suggestions.

Bolzano did not have a proper historical perspective; in particular, he lacked knowledge of medieval philosophy. Even his knowledge of modern philosophy was limited. As a result, it was too easy to look to ontology, to treat concepts, meanings, objects, and judgments as things; the ontological status of concepts, etc., remained important questions to be answered; all the more since their status could not be determined or defined without looking to metaphysics. Bolzano's theory of truths in themselves ultimately had to be a sort of Platonism. It was effective and functioned at the level of mathematical operations. However, to evaluate its philosophical value, it was necessary to look to criteria outside of mathematics and to a science other than mathematics. Bolzano's originality in mathematics did not automatically translate into originality in philosophy. He stopped at a certain version of Platonism, the version that the Arabic philosopher Avicenna represented in the middle Ages.

Frege is the next example of a great mathematician and logician. In his discoveries he encroached upon philosophy and as a result he constructed the framework of his own ontology. On the one hand, Frege's ontology is based on an extrapolation of mathematical inquiries. On the other hand, it is based on a certain degree of knowledge of philosophy. Frege had not studied philosophy as such, but he had studied mathematics.[5]

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4   Bolzano was unable to publish his work in Austria-Hungary, but published abroad. In turn, his student, Robert Zimmermann, spread the views of his master in the empire by means of his textbook of philosophy (*Philosophische Propädeutik*) for secondary schools. The textbook was published three times (in the years 1853, 1860, and 1867). Its readers included Brentano's students, among whom was Husserl. Brentano, for his own, part cited Bolzano, and lectured on the topic of Bolzano's short work, *Paradoxes of the Infinite* (*Paradoxien des Unendlichen*). Some other philosophers who looked to Bolzano even before Husserl were Benno Kerry, Alois Höfler, and Kazimierz Jerzy Skrzypna-Twardowski; cf. R.D. Rollinger, *Husserl's Position in the School of Brentano* (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic, 1999), 71–73.

5   In the curriculum, there was only one lecture on philosophy, called "The System of Kantian or Critical Philosophy" (*Das System der Kantischen oder kritischen Philosophie*), and Kuno

Since Leibniz's time, the idea of arranging human knowledge into a single whole was becoming increasingly attractive. That whole would include not only actual knowledge, but possible knowledge as well. The whole would take the form of a system that possessed its own first premises (or axioms) and rules for deducing subsequent theses (*calculus ratiocinator*). A universal language should be adapted to the whole. That language would make it possible to give univocal names to all the elements (*characteristica universalis*). Frege concentrated on mathematical systems connected with logic, and he searched for a language that would be fitting or perfect. That language would be capable of overcoming the imperfections of everyday language.[6] The perfect language would contain meaning and reference. It would designate objects that at the most basic level would be simple, would not be properties, and would not be extended in space. The objects would be able to form greater wholes, and then they would be called aggregates.[7] Meaning could be treated individually and subjectively, but could also be treated objectively. In the last case, meaning would have a status independent of the thinking subject, just as propositions in themselves had an independent status in Bolzano's philosophy. Even God knowing meanings cannot influence them.[8] To sum up, objective representations came to the foreground. Those representations were independent of any mind, and in them existence was understood only as a property of

Fischer gave it in the winter semester of 1870/71. According to Fischer, logic and metaphysics were domains that considered the same problem but from different philosophical perspectives. How is it possible to provide a ground for science? The answer is that science is a conceptual structure that is revealed by logic. That structure was based on being that can be known, of which ontology speaks, and science is built on the principles of knowledge, which are shown by the branch of knowledge concerning science. The analysis of concepts with respect to quantity leads to formal logic; cf. Lothar Kreiser, *Gottlob Frege. Leben-Werk-Zeit* [Gottlob Frege: Life-Work-Times] (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 2001), 64ff.

6   Eike-Henner W. Kluge, *The Metaphysics of Gottlob Frege. An Essay in Ontological Reconstruction* (The Hague-Boston-London: M. Nijhoff), 1980, 240n.

7   Ibid., 257ff.

8   In this way, Frege avoided both psychologism (that meanings are only contents that are thought by individual subjects) and metaphysics (that meanings are dependent on God). This would ultimately derive the issues from ideas typical of St. Augustine and Leibniz, that meanings ultimately are ideas that reside in God's mind. In this way ontology would have a foundation and would be independent of both psychology and metaphysics. While Frege excluded God from the sphere of the senses, the clearest sign of the turn to ontology in his views was that he reduced existence in existential propositions to the category of a property, and it was a property of the second degree (existence is a property of properties). Moreover, existence is a certain way of predication that is typical of numbers: "The affirmation of existence is in fact nothing but denial of the number naught"; Frege, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, trans. Montgomery Furth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964) §53.

a property.[9] Such a position would be the quintessence of ontology. Its object would be simply an object in general (*Gegenstand überhaupt*) cut off from its existential and theistic context.[10]

When Frege developed his ontology, he primarily had in mind the foundations of mathematics. Hence in his work two categories of being appear. Functions are unsaturated (*ungestätigt*), incomplete (*unvollständig*), and in need of completion (*ergänzungbedürgtig*). Objects, on the other hand, are saturated, complete, and do not need completion.[11] There may be many functions, and functions can occur on many levels. Basically, functions refer to predicates and to arguments.

Objects, on the other hand, cannot be defined because they are simple. One can only indicate what one understands by them, or one can define them negatively by saying that anything that is not a function is an object.[12] When definite pronouns are used, they refer to objects, but indefinite pronouns refer to functions. As indefinite pronouns they express something general that is a predicate. The question of the relation of the object to a function (a predicate) is a question of the relation of what is concrete to what is general. Thus this is an old problem from the controversy over universals, except in this instance it is concerned with mathematics, and an attempt to construct a proper ontology for mathematics.

Within the object, Frege makes distinctions between scope or denotation (the value of truth, the scale, the correlates of functions, places, moments, the span of time) and meaning. Within functions are located functions all the values of which are true, and functions of which not all the values are true, whether they contain one argument (or concept) or two arguments (or relations).[13] In any proposition (true of false) the grammatical subject is the object of which something is predicated. That which is predicated, as a predicate, is a concept. As we can see, this ontology fits closely to Frege's mathematical views. Beings are established on account of their compatibility with the system of mathematics that was developed.[14] They do not refer to the world around us, but to the structure of mathematical knowledge, and mathematical knowledge

9   Ibid., 273ff.

10   Ignacio Angelelli, *Studies on Gottlob Frege and Traditional Philosophy* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1967), 11.

11   Charles E. Caton. "An Apparent Difficulty in Frege's Ontology," in Klemke, *Essays on Frege*, 99. Frege did not explain what he had in mind when he used metaphorical descriptions such as saturation and non-saturation.

12   Ibid., 106.

13   Frege, *Begriff und Gegenstand*, 1892, para. 12; cf. R.S. Wells. "Frege's Ontology," in Klemke, *Essays on Frege*, 8.

14   "Frege sets up his ontology to make logic and mathematics intelligible"; ibid., 28.

possesses its own rules and object, where that object is independent of mental experiences. The ontology that Frege proposed was somehow supposed to objectivize and strengthen the power of the thesis of mathematics despite the relativization of mathematics to psychologism. Frege also opposed formalism; he emphasized that not only scope or denotation comes into play, but meaning also comes into play. Meaning may have a purely subjective character as a human mental experience, but it may also have an objective character on account of its content.[15] Frege focused on the content of a concept (*begrifflicher Inhalt*). We can make judgments concerning certain concepts. Not all connections of concepts are judgments (they could be only possible contents of judgments). Two propositions may have the same conceptual content but differ in meaning. Concepts belong to the sphere of logic and cannot be known by the senses. Concepts do not belong to the world around us. Since a concept is identified with a property, so also there are no properties in the world. So we should not be surprised at the statement that concepts are objects but even so, are not real.[16] Besides concepts there are also subjective representations (*subjektive Vorstellungen*), such as sense impressions, which are incommunicable. The words that correspond to them concern objective concepts. The words designate concepts. With regard to existence, Frege had in mind two instances. The first instance is the assertion that a word designates something, for example, '*a*' exists, and '*a*' designates something. The second instance is the assertion that '*a*' is there.[17] Thus, Frege considered existence either in the semantic dimension, or in the dimension of location, but did not consider the strictly existential dimension. Meanings and concepts are not encompassed by time and space, and so they do not exist in the sense of having a location, but they are real since they can be grasped by the mind.[18] It is clear to see that in his meditations on the foundations of mathematics, Frege engaged in the old controversy over universals but did not have the metaphysical distance that should have led him to construct an ontology, that is, a theory of the object and of concepts apart from the real world.

For Frege, what is located in the framework of a function, especially in the framework of a concept, is a being, because it is that to which a concept refers.[19] In addition, concepts are properties, and properties are real. As well, concepts can also have their own properties (of the second degree, as it were). Concepts

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15   Ibid., 32ff.

16   Reinhardt Grossmann, "Frege's Ontology," in Klemke, *Essays on Frege*, 84.

17   Ibid., 95.

18   Ibid., 97–98.

19   E.D. Klemke, "Frege's Ontology: Realism," in Klemke, *Essays on Frege*, 158–159.

are independent of human minds and have not been made by human minds, and so they are beings of some sort. If a proposition contains two objects (*A* is greater than *B*), then it is a relation, and not a predication in which the predicate would be a concept. The relation is a function and it is also a being of some sort.[20] Properties can be understood concretely or abstractly. Concepts are objective, but not actual. This means that concepts are independent of the subject who makes judgments.[21] Here Frege remarks that they are not subjective, because we all can understand them, and so they are not merely our private thoughts. They exist independently of our acts of understanding. Frege said that properties are concepts, and concepts are a reality outside the mind, although that reality is different from the reality of objects. Although some people have attempted to treat Frege's position as an expression of realism, his realism recognizes the reality of concepts, and so it is really a form of idealism.[22]

According to Frege, concepts have first place among objects (there can be concepts while there are not yet any objects). In addition, Frege rejects the theory of abstraction (as a way of forming concepts), and thinks that when we know an object we are recognizing only a relation between the object and the subject.[23] An object is designated by a proper name. The proper name expresses a meaning and stands in for what is designated. Between a name (a proper name) and the object that is designated, there is the idea, which is conceived subjectively as a mental state, and the meaning, which is not something subjective and is not an object.[24] What is crucial here is the meaning. The meaning acquires a special status as the third reality, and this meaning is indicative of Frege's connection with Platonism, and so with idealism. With that said, the word idea appears in Frege's work in a post-Cartesian and not a Platonic meaning. The meaning is not the name, nor the designate, nor the concept.

Frege introduces the concept as the function, whereby the name possesses the value of truth. A concept, unlike a function, is a predicate.[25] He presents three arguments for the existence of concepts. We have the same thing in mind when we think of the Pythagorean theorem. That which makes equilateral triangles equilateral is independent of what we think about it. Also, when we think about an equilateral triangle, we are thinking about the same thing, and

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20   Ibid., 160.
21   Ibid., 162–163.
22   Ibid., 163.
23   Ibid., 163–164.
24   Ibid., 169.
25   M.S. Gram, "Frege, Concepts, and Ontology," in Klemke, *Essays on Frege*, 179.

so it is not an idea (which according to Frege's definition is subjective), but it is something that he calls a concept. Ideas as subjective mental states cannot be communicated. Finally, when we know something we recognize that it is something that belongs to a certain kind, and in this case it is a concept, and not a subjective individual idea.[26] Concepts are neither things of the external world, nor are ideas.

Besides the authors mentioned here, whose achievements in mathematics were incomparably more profound than in metaphysics, we should also mention Alexius Meinong, the originator of the theory of the object, and that theory proceeds exactly along the lines set by ontology.[27] When Meinong criticizes psychologism, he also emphasizes the content of cognitive acts, but in such a way as to go beyond those acts and refer to objects. However, those objects, as they are not in a concrete way the content of our acts, are independent of any external objects, that is, they are independent of existing reality. In the sphere of the object there is not only what is possible, but also what is contradictory, because we can think about what is contradictory. As contradictory, it is a sort of content, having its own objective counterpart, even if this does not mean that it has a real counterpart. Existence is only a mode of the object, along with subsistence and givenness (*Gegebenheit*). The first concerns real things, the second concerns the objects of mathematics, and the third concerns what is impossible, what neither exists nor subsists, but somehow is given (*es gibt*).[28]

Meinong mentions four types of objects and their corresponding acts whereby we apprehend them. They are real objects (notes in a melody), or ideal objects (the concept of difference or identity), objects apprehended in representations, whether it is objectivity as the affirmation of being in general or a being as this being here, objects apprehended in the mind, or the quality of dignity, that is, respect for the true, the good, and the beautiful as they are apprehended in feelings, and the quality of desire, that is, the desire for duty or an end purpose.

As we can see, the concept of the object is quite elastic; it functions as correlative to intentional acts that cover both the intellect and feelings. It also claims to be independent of those acts and, with the exception of the first object, it claims to be independent of reality.

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26   Ibid., 180–186.

27   Alexius Meinong, *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* [Studies on Subject Theory and Psychology] (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1904).

28   Ibid., Chaps. 3–4.

Meinong's conception of the object has its roots both in medieval philosophy, and so philosophy, particularly in Avicenna (the third nature) and Scotus (existence as a mode), and in modern ontology (Clauberg). Modern ontology, after all, deemed that 'nothing' is in fact 'something', since we can think about it, and in connection with this, it should be included in the object of ontology just as much as being or the concept of being is included in the object of ontology. Meinong's theory was taken up primarily by phenomenologists who attached the greatest importance not to reality as independently existing, but to the object understood as the correlate of human mental acts, which would include both higher acts (the intellect and will) and lower acts (feelings).

In summary, the ontologies of Bolzano, Frege, and Meinong show that their respective knowledge of the history of philosophy, and of metaphysics in particular, was shallow. Their ontologies became very influential, mainly because their authors were excellent mathematicians and were also opposed to psychologism. However, from a strictly metaphysical point of view, those ontologies are a variety of Platonism whose status has not yet been precisely analyzed by philosophers who have been primarily educated in the discipline of, not metaphysics, but mathematics.[29]

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29   It is noteworthy here that the influence of Scotus reached North America, because the philosophizing logician C.S. Peirce, who directly declared his admiration for the philosophy of Scotus, resorted to the Avicennian-Scotist distinction between three natures. Peirce called himself 'a scholastic realist,' and here he had in mind his recognition of the reality of the third nature; cf. B. de Saint-Maurice, "The Contemporary Significance of Duns Scotus' Philosophy," in Ryan and Bonansea, *John Duns Scotus*, 361; cf. L. Honnefelder, *Scientia transcendens: Die formale Bestimmung der Seiendheit und Realität in der Metaphysik des Mittelaters und der Neuzeit* (*Duns Scotus, Suárez, Wolff, Kant, Pierce*) [Scientific Transcendence: The Formal Determination of Beingness and Reality in the Metaphysics of the Middle Ages and Modern Times (Duns Scotus, Suarez, Wolff, Kant, Pierce)] (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1990), 383–384. Peirce's memoirs also tell how he first became familiar with the views of Augustine and Thomas, and later leaned toward Scotus, with the reservation that Scotus's position was somewhat nominalistic ("I ultimately came to approve the opinion of Scotus, although I think he inclines too much toward nominalism"' C.S. Peirce, "Pragmatism," in *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Vol 2, 1893–1913*, ed. N. Houser and C. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 424. Peirce thought that philosophy is composed of two divisions: logic and metaphysics. Logic is the science about thought as such, and metaphysics is the science about being in general, and the laws and types of being. Logic is more fundamental, and logic must be the guide for metaphysics at every step ("it seems to me one of the least doubtful of propositions that metaphysics must take as the guide of its step the theory of logic." C.S. Peirce, *Philosophy and the Conduct of Life*; in ibid., 36.

Phenomenology apart from Metaphysics: Husserl, Ingarden, Heidegger

Phenomenology was the school of thought that most strongly concentrated within it the legacy of ontology. Although Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, emphatically said that phenomenology differs fundamentally and essentially from the ontology of the eighteenth century,[1] that was a difference between ontologies, and not between metaphysics and ontology. Husserl's phenomenology is eidetic intuition, that is, intuition that allows one to grasp an essence. It is precisely on account of the reference of intuition to essence and not to being that phenomenology is part of the philosophical tradition in which metaphysics has been directed to apprehend cognitive contents, although the difference may concern what sort of contents they are and how they are apprehended. In Husserl's case, we are dealing with a particular procedure that puts the ordinary apprehension of the world around us in brackets (*epoché*), and thereby natural consciousness becomes pure consciousness. As a result of that procedure, the world and consciousness become only phenomena. A phenomenological analysis can then be made that would allow one to describe the relations between consciousness and the world. Phenomenology conceived in this way is first philosophy because only when the *epoché* is used can we make the subsequent philosophical analyses concerning phenomena and consciousness.[2] These analyses have a transcendental character, that is, they are not limited by ordinary cognition.[3]

Evidently, the basic question that appears here concerns how when we suspend judgment about the real existence of something we can later resolve what is real and what is not, since there is no passage from conceptual content to existence. If such a passage could be found, then it is only because the meaning of existence and the meaning of the concept of reality have been changed.

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1   Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1970), 138.

2   S. Judycki, "Epoché." In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 3: 200–201.

3   "and the natural realm of knowledge is at the same time exchanged for the transcendental. This implies that everything natural, everything given beforehand in straightforward intuition , must be built up again with a new originality and not interpreted merely sequaciously as already definitive," Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 138.

Such a change at the semantic level cannot restore reality to the world. Husserl was not pursuing true reality of that kind at all, because he was interested in questions of a strictly ontological character.

When the object of the inquiries of phenomenology is not the real world, then it is simply the object, including objects in general. Those are descriptions that, as we have seen, already appeared in the history of ontology at least since the times of Kant. The object to which research in formal logic refers comes into play here. Research in formal logic is identified with research in formal ontology.[4] However, the world that we acknowledge as real is "conditioned by the essential laws of necessity."[5] The world includes an a priori ontological element (including the a priori elements of nature, living beings, society, and culture), whereby the world is intelligible to a certain degree, yet for the world to be fully intelligible it needs references to the root of transcendental subjectivity, because only that root defines the world's 'constituted meaning.'[6] Therefore the world is a kind of object in general, and the world's structure extends to transcendental subjectivity.

When Husserl used the word ontology or ontological he had in mind a series of a priori categories that are part of the apprehended object. In the case of the material object, they are properties, states, processes, relations, and complexes. Other things have their own analogous conditions. For all things, the individual as the first object (*Urgegenstand*) becomes the reference.[7] In this case, it is no longer a question of the object in general, as was the case in certain previous ontologies, but of the first object. At the same time, the entire sphere of things is covered under the name of the domain of being, which would suggest that the concept of being is included in the sphere of consciousness, and the world is one of the instances of the sphere of consciousness, but not an autonomous instance of it. According to Husserl, the phenomenological cognition of the object is a process in which the concrete object is referred to other objects that underlie it to the point where there is no longer any such reference. It is at this level that the first objects appear. Husserl includes sensory objects among them, because all possible objects refer to them.[8]

The ontology of the founder of phenomenology may be reduced to the description of the rather complex way in which the objects of human

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4   Ibid., 50, 63, 65.

5   Ibid., 138.

6   Ibid.

7   Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Boston, London: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 37.

8   Ibid., 19.

consciousness arise (or are constituted), where the concept of reality does not possess any meaning. However, the real world, despite the imposing evidence of the apprehension of the world, is put in brackets for methodological reasons. At this point, Husserl follows Descartes in saying that science needs to be apodictic. Yet Husserl thinks that the non-existence of the world is possible, and as such, only possible, it does not fit in the framework of scientific knowledge.[9] Husserl's ontology, which therefore arose in the context of an a priori methodology of scientific knowledge, is not concerned with knowing the world or reality, but is concerned with finding a type of knowing that meets the conditions of being apodictic and necessary. Only under these conditions is science truly science. Since the real world does not meet these conditions, the object of scientific knowledge is bracketed, and consciousness takes its place. This is the same motif that led Plato to idealism (the material world does not meet the conditions for scientific knowledge; only ideas meet them), which underlie Descartes's philosophy, and then was continued in Kant's and Husserl's thought.

Despite everything, Husserl saw a place for metaphysics. What kind of metaphysics was it? It was a system of metaphysics based completely on phenomenology and phenomenology's conclusions; it is a question of how we should understand the object and subject of knowledge. As Husserl stated directly, his metaphysics is phenomenological transcendental idealism that looks to Leibniz's monadology.[10] As we see, his system of metaphysics has nothing in common with classical metaphysics and we may wonder why such a sort of philosophy (phenomenological transcendental idealism) is called metaphysics at all.

Husserl was primarily interested in rejecting the dangers that spring from solipsism, and he did not want the object of cognition to be constructed, since in phenomenology, the objects of knowledge unveil themselves in pure intuition.[11] In connection with this, the concept of being depends completely on consciousness: "everything existing for me must derive its existential sense exclusively from me myself, from my sphere of consciousness retains its validity

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9   Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 17–18.

10   "Phenomenological transcendental idealism has presented itself as a *monadology*, which, despite all our deliberate suggestions of Leibniz's metaphysics, draws its content purely from phenomenological explication of the transcendental reduction, accordingly from the most originary evidence, wherein all conceivable evidences must be grounded—or from the most originary legitimacy, which is the source of all legitimacies and, in particular, all legitimacies of knowledge"; ibid., 150.

11   Ibid.

and fundamental importance."[12] When the concept of being depends completely on consciousness, that is the view of 'phenomenology'; the term 'metaphysics' is used here perhaps only because he is speaking of the existence and meaning of being. This leads to the conclusion that since existence and meaning are treated as completely relative to human consciousness (though they are not constructed by our consciousness), phenomenology must be prior to metaphysics.

Others continued with Husserl's philosophy. We may consider especially the ideas of Roman Ingarden and Martin Heidegger with respect to increasing differences between ontology and metaphysics.

According to Ingarden, another science is needed apart from the particular sciences, which investigate facts. This other science concerns questions related to pure possibilities or pure connections of necessity. In other words, it concerns the connections between ideal qualities in which possibilities have their source. This other science is ontology. Ontology investigates necessities and possibilities in the framework of ideal qualities by the analysis of the contents of ideas.[13] The analyses may be made independently of the existence of the real world or the existence of any objects defined by axioms. The results of these analyses are very important for the particular sciences because what belongs to ontology is theoretically prior and more general, and does not imply any real facts, because the only limit is possibility. Ontology also explains the primary concepts of the a priori particular sciences and shows the truth of their axioms.[14] Ingarden explains that his conception of ontology is very broad and not limited to a priori knowledge acquired in the cognition of directly evident contents of ideas, but without deduction. Ingarden's ontology is not ontology as Husserl understands it. The Husserlian ontology was not supposed to encompass the entire phenomenology of pure experiences.[15]

Apart from ontology, there is also metaphysics, which is concerned with issues that are close to the particular sciences and to ontology. What are these issues? Ingarden first resorts to examples to show what he regards as the sphere of the inquiries of metaphysics. The first metaphysical problem is the concurrence in one individual of correlated physiological and mental processes

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12   Ibid. This way of understanding being and its meaning underlies Heidegger's ontology.

13   Roman Ingarden, *Spór o istnienie świata* [Controversy over the Existence of the World], vol. 1 (Kraków: Nakł. Polskiej Akademii Umiejetnosci, 1947), 27–35.

14   Ibid., 39.

15   Ibid., 51. Unfortunately, Ingarden did not explain in any detail what conception of ontology Husserl used. From what Ingarden wrote it follows that Husserl thought of the phenomenology of pure experiences as standing in opposition to ontologies.

whose cause would be found in a third thing, yet where the third thing is ac-
cidental in relation to the essence of the two sorts of processes. In this case, In-
garden raises a typically Cartesian problem, the relation of the soul to the body.
He calls this a metaphysical problem; although de facto it is an anthropological
problem because it concerns the relation of the physiological and the mental
in one being, but not in all beings. Metaphysics investigates being qua being,
and not being as human beings. Descartes gave the anthropological problem
a metaphysical dimension, because he did not consider the object of classical
metaphysics and he cut through humanity's direct cognitive connection to the
reality that surrounds him. Then he put the problem of the body's relation to
the soul on center stage, and derivative problems such as the relation of the
physiological to the mental. Although that was a philosophical problem of the
first degree, it was not thereby a metaphysical problem, if metaphysics is to
retain its historically grounded meaning.

The second metaphysical problem is the question of the essence of organ-
isms, and the difference between mental processes and physiological pro-
cesses. The particular sciences concerning facts do not raise this problem, but
the problem can nevertheless be analyzed. Metaphysics investigates facts that
are not bare facts but are contained in the essence of the thing that the fact
encompasses. Understanding consists in grasping the essence of a specific ob-
ject and of "necessary ideal connections between pure qualities."[16] In this way
we start from what is found in the world and proceed to what is ideal. As we
can see, on the basis of Ingarden's examples, the Cartesian problem returns,
but not the metaphysical problem, insofar as it concerns not unity, but the
differences that occur in the case of mental and physiological processes. Sub-
sequent examples show Ingarden's turn toward Platonism, since we should
search for pure qualities and ideal connections. For Ingarden, metaphysics is
Platonism.

This does not mean that Ingarden completely ignored the question of be-
ing as the object of philosophy, but he commented on that question in the
context of ontology, not in the context of metaphysics. Ingarden mentioned
the view that ontology makes, "only an evidential analysis of the content based
solely of the ideas that are ideas of any being of any sort, or to say it better, of
something that exists, and so, any object in the broad sense of the term, but
without regard to whether they are ideas of ontologically subsistent individual
objects or their non-subsistent moments of any sort."[17] He regards this view as
open to discussion because then we would have to exclude formal logic and

16   Ibid., 37.
17   Ibid., 51.

the theory of knowledge from ontology, since we would not know how to classify logical constructs, which are on the one hand set in opposition to what exists, but which on the other hand exist in some way.[18] Certainly, Ingarden felt more comfortable as an ontologist than as a metaphysician, and therefore the greater problem is not the problem of the world's existence, but the problem of the content of ideas and the status of the objects of formal logic.

As for other problems concerning metaphysics, Ingarden looked to the Kantian question of whether metaphysics is possible. That question arose in the context of Wolff's ontology, which Kant criticized. The concept of possible being was replaced with the concept of the possibility of knowing things in themselves. This led, on the one hand, to the subjective (a priori) conditions for the construction of the object of knowledge, and on the other hand it led to a search for new ways of cultivating metaphysics, no longer at the level of theoretical knowledge, but at the level of moral experience. Ingarden was concerned with questions about the "actual existence of the world in the sense of the whole (the generality) of everything that exists"[19] including God as the fundamental metaphysical question. That conception of the metaphysical issues, which may seem to be clear, has certain nuances that must be considered. The first nuance is that the understanding of being (of the world) is not developed as a problem in the perspective of its ultimate reasons as it was in classical metaphysics, but the existence of being in general. The developing of this problem brings metaphysics into the region of Cartesian-Kantian philosophy where doubt or criticism is put at center-stage. The second nuance concerns the introduction of the concept of the world in a rather imprecise fashion, if the world is taken to include God as well. In such a conception, philosophy would become mythology, because in mythology the gods were merely part of the world, while in metaphysics God was transcendental, and God's existence was understood indirectly as the reason for the world's existence.

Ingarden does not make a very clear distinction between traditional metaphysics and modern metaphysics, which in fact is ontology. We can see this when he discusses the status of existential judgments. He writes:

> The fundamental metaphysical judgments are thus primarily existential judgments. However, not all existential judgments are metaphysical. Only when in a judgment the existence of a certain object is conceived of as such that either it is in itself necessary by its essence, or it stands in a certain connection with a being that it is necessary by its essence, from

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18   Ibid.

19   Ibid., 52–53.

which it can be intelligibly derived as from its ultimate principle, are we
dealing with metaphysical existential judgments.[20]

We may have some doubt as to whether Ingarden is speaking here of meta-
physical judgments rather than ontological judgments. He speaks of God as a
being that is necessary by its essence (which is a reference to the ontological
proof for the existence of God), and God is treated as an example of the first
existential judgment, so that our metaphysical knowledge would begin by af-
firming the existence of God. Furthermore, secondary or derivative beings are
supposed to be drawn out from a necessary essence, which would be similar to
deduction from a first principle, and that also belongs to the realm of ontology.
Meanwhile, the starting point in classical metaphysics is found in existential
judgments that refer to beings, the existence of which we know directly. Show-
ing the connection of the existence of any sort of being with the Divine Being
is not a condition for formulating an existential judgment. The reference to the
Divine Being, or more precisely, to the absolute being, in order to avoid strictly
religious connotations, is a subsequent step in metaphysical knowledge, but
it is not a condition for the formulation of a metaphysical judgment, that is,
for the affirmation of what we simply know as a being. After all, to affirm the
existence of any being of any sort, any of the beings that remain within the
scope of our direct knowledge, occurs constantly, and the reference to the ab-
solute being appears in the second phase when we are trying to understand
the reason for the existence of something that exists but does not need to exist.
Meanwhile, in the ontological presentation of the problem, we start from the
concept of necessary being and we end by deducing possible beings. This is
ontology, but it is not metaphysics.

What difference does Ingarden see between metaphysics and ontology?

> The difference between metaphysics and ontology is primarily that on-
> tology studies the content of ideas, while metaphysics studies individual
> objects and ideas, but only as ideas. Hence ontological judgments, as I
> have remarked, are free from the acknowledgment of any factual exis-
> tence (real or ideal!), while metaphysical judgments are either simply
> existential judgments or categorical judgments.[21]

Thus, ontology does not investigate existence, but as Ingarden explains,
while calling on Meinong's theory of the object, ontology is *eine daseinsfreie*

20   Ibid., 53.
21   Ibid., 55.

Wissenschaft, that is a science free of existence.[22] Such an approach to ontology seems to be faithful to the tradition from which ontology is derived, but is ontology really metaphysics? Is it the task of metaphysics to study real being, or to study ideas and individual objects? If we consider the metamorphoses that the concept of the object has undergone, along with its becoming unreal, the attempt to show the difference between ontology and metaphysics by emphasizing that metaphysics studies an individual object is completely unsatisfactory. After all, the objects of ontology do not need to be real, since the scope of the concept of the object goes far beyond the concept of real being. Also, the attribution to metaphysics of ideas, and the study of ideas as ideas, clearly directs metaphysics toward Platonism, and so it also directs metaphysics toward ontology. What else is the study of ideas as ideas if not ontology? It is rather hard to believe, but Ingarden here did not at all consider metaphysics as it was classically understood, that is, as looking to Aristotle. After all, Aristotle was the founder of metaphysics, not Plato.

Finally, Ingarden says that ontology is prior to metaphysics, that it is the assumption of metaphysics because it, "provides [metaphysics] with a series of precise concepts of possible individual objects, as well as the concepts of their general and individual essence, and moreover, a certain defined store of a priori truths concerning possible connections and relations between individual objects."[23] In short, ontology becomes first philosophy, and metaphysics becomes second philosophy. The problem is that these ontological approaches imply a type of knowledge that by its essence is pre-realistic, that is, it assumes the existence of knowledge that appears in human beings, before they have any contact with a really existing being. Moreover, ontology is supposed to concern the condition for knowing reality in the framework of metaphysics. In such a case, realism would be seen in the light of idealism, since the knowledge of reality is supposed to be preceded by an analysis of consciousness and ideas. If reality were studied through the lenses of ontology, would it still be reality?

It is rather impossible, and Ingarden's description of metaphysical questions bears the mark of ontology. Thus his metaphysics is still a variety of ontology. His assurance that metaphysics possesses its own experience independent of ontology, and that ontology will not replace metaphysics, is not helpful here.[24] Experience is supposed to be reduced to the assertion, "a certain definite individual object *X* really and indubitably exists (which already goes beyond all ontology), and so in connection with this we must discover what constitutes

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22   Ibid., 55n1.
23   Ibid., 56.
24   Ibid., 57.

its individual nature, and by the same token we must discover under which idea object *X* falls as an individual."[25] As we have already emphatically stated, we are speaking here of an object, a category that is definitely ontological, and the study of this object is directed to seeking a nature and an idea, which also belongs to ontology, because in classical metaphysics, we search for the reason that renders being qua being 'free of contradiction.' We are especially concerned with the reason for existence as such, without which there would be no being.[26] In classical metaphysics we do not search for a nature or an idea, but we search for the fundamental categories of being, the structure of being, and causes. Ingarden is clearly working with the Platonic conception of philosophy, from which not metaphysics, but ontology grew. The metaphysics of which he writes clings so closely to an ontology that precedes metaphysics, and that metaphysics, as such, investigates what is especially important for ontology, that is, natures and ideas, but it does not study really existing being, because it cannot study it.

As Ingarden sees it, metaphysics is subordinated in various ways to ontology. Even if he speaks of a special type of metaphysical experience, the perspective of inquiry, which also precedes metaphysics, and which directs the questions of metaphysics, has a definitely ontological character. Ingarden's metaphysics is an ontology.

How did Martin Heidegger see ontology and metaphysics? We know that he was familiar with some of the views of Scotus. Heidegger devoted his habilitation thesis to Scotus,[27] but only the first part of his thesis concerned the views of Scotus, while the second part concerned Thomas of Erfurt, as was discovered later by Martin Grabmann in 1926.[28] Heidegger's reading of Scotus had some influence on him, and that influence can be seen to be implicitly present in certain views he held, and in how he promoted ontology against metaphysics. The last happened when Heidegger, following Husserl, said that possibility stood higher than reality.[29] This was a continuation of the tradition

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25   Ibid.

26   Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, *Metaphysics. An Outline of the History of Being* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), 37–46.

27   Martin Heidegger. *Die Kategorien—und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* [Categories—And Importance of Teaching Duns Scotus]. Habilitation Theses. Tübingen, Universität Freiburg im Breisgau, 1916. OCLC: 3449214.

28   Jack Zupko, "Thomas of Erfurt," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. (Spring 2015).

29   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 62–63; Sean J. McGrath, "Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language," *Review of Metaphysics* 57:2 (2003):339–358, at 339.

of Avicennian-Scotist metaphysics that was transformed into ontology in the seventeenth century.

It is not strange that in his early and better known work, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time, 1927), Heidegger rarely used the word metaphysics, though the word ontology was often used. One of the major motifs in all of Heidegger's works and among thinkers influenced by him, is the desire to 'go beyond metaphysics.' It is all the more worthwhile, then, to see what Heidegger meant by metaphysics.

Sein und Zeit begins by asserting that the question concerning being "has been forgotten. Even though in our time we deem it progressive to give our approval to 'metaphysics' again."[30] In that assertion, Heidegger was trying to set an opposition between metaphysics (but the sort of metaphysics that had been reactivated at that time, at the beginning of the twentieth century), and something that he described as the question concerning being. We do not know exactly what sort of metaphysics in particular he had in mind, because he never explicitly clarified which metaphysics he was thinking of. We also do not know what the 'question concerning being' is supposed to mean, he was going to elucidate that point later in his book.[31]

Heidegger formulated a series of objections to metaphysics, and these should be mentioned, because then we will be able to reconstruct what he understood by metaphysics. The metaphysics of his time no longer discussed οὐσία (substance). What constitutes οὐσία occupied Plato and Aristotle, but later it was no longer studied, and then it was reformulated in various ways right up to Hegel's *Logic*.[32] Heidegger presented in short form the history of the controversy over *ousía*, but it is interesting how he completely ignored Neoplatonism and medieval philosophy. His account of the matter is very selective and limited to what he knew about it at that time.

Heidegger's second remark concerns the dogma that supposedly had been formed on the basis of early Greek interpretations of being, when the question of the meaning of being was regarded as superfluous, and at the same time the omission of the question was approved. Such a diagnosis is all the more strange, since the question concerning the meaning of being in the Greek tradition was the question of the cause of being (because from it flowed understanding; that is, the discovery of meaning). However, it is difficult after the

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30   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21.

31   It is difficult to find the right interpretation of Heidegger's thought, not only on account of his philosophy, but also because it is difficult to translate some German words adequately (such as *Dasein*) into other languages, including English.

32   Ibid.

fact to impose a special interpretation of the problem of philosophy, while expressing amazement that the problem not only did not exist, but that it was consciously left out of consideration. This could not have happened if the problem had been posed in a way typical of Heidegger himself, and not typical of the Greek philosophers.

Even more surprising is Heidegger's assertion, probably the expression of a generally held option, when he writes: "it is said: 'being' is the most general and most empty concept. As such it cannot be subjected to any attempt at definition."[33] Such a conception of being no longer belongs in the Greek tradition, but specifically comes from Hegel.[34] The problem of the non-definability of the concept of being appeared in Aristotle in the context of his idea of definition in which one must consider the proximate genus and specific difference. That is impossible in the case of being, because there is nothing above being, and a difference would have to be a being, and so it would not be a difference.[35] Heidegger does not give heed to any actual metaphysics texts that discuss the question, but arbitrarily imposes his own interpretation. He thinks that the fact that it is impossible to define being cannot release us from asking about the meaning of being.[36] After all, Aristotle in his analyses that were later called the *Metaphysics* only asserts that fact that, given such a conception of definition (proximate genus and specific difference), being cannot be defined, which does not mean that being remains a complete mystery or, as Heidegger suggests, that being is something that is too evident. Being is deciphered by studying the substructure and causal conditions of being. That is neither evident, nor an absolute mystery, but it is a specific work of thought.

To summarize, the image of classical metaphysics and the problematic of classical metaphysics is deformed in Heidegger's commentary, and from the point of view of the history of metaphysics that deformation is difficult to accept. It is an a priori vision imposed as he attempted to expound upon his own ontology.

This is clear to see when Heidegger calls Greek philosophy ontology, whereas, as we have seen, ontology only arose in the seventeenth century. Heidegger writes:

> Greek ontology and its history, which through various filiations and deviations still marks today as well a conceptual store of philosophy, is proof

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33   Ibid.
34   Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 59.
35   Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 226–233.
36   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 23.

that the understanding of oneself and of being in general draws its be-
ingness from the 'world' and that the ontology that arose in this way is
subject to a tradition that reduces it to evidence and material that must
simply be reworked (the case of Hegel).[37]

The problem is not only that there was no Greek ontology, but also that the
metamorphoses that occurred in the concept of being essentially expressed a
different conception of being, whether as being or as the concept of being, and
the conception of human beings as such, who, as subjects, are different from
the world around them. Meanwhile for Heidegger, philosophical thought had
moved in a straight line and found its fulfillment in Hegel: being is material
that should be reworked. Hegel was the culmination only of a certain current
of metaphysics, specifically the abstract current, which had its luminaries in
the form of Plato, Avicenna, and Scotus. It is amazing how many deformations
of the history of metaphysics may be found in that one sentence.

Heidegger with egregious bad taste, if we may use such an expression, criti-
cized the medieval period. He allowed himself to say that the medieval pe-
riod was the epoch that gave to Greek ontology a 'scholastic stigma.' The word
'scholastic' has a pejorative ring as the result of polemics in the period of the
Reformation, but the term in and of itself (Gk. *scholastikós*) means a noble way
of spending time in thoughts, including philosophical thoughts. His addition
of the word 'stigma' would somehow overflow the measure of bitterness be-
cause animals or slaves are branded or stigmatized. Meanwhile, if we consider
the disinterested cognitive effort of many ingenious medieval thinkers such
as Thomas or Scotus, the attempt to stigmatize them, to say the least, is out
of place if the discussion concerns philosophy and not ideology, or the sort of
'philosophical correctness' that has been fashionable since the Enlightenment,
to which unfortunately Heidegger succumbs on many occasions.

Heidegger's philosophy, at least in his own opinion, is basically the elimina-
tion of almost the entire legacy of Western philosophy. That legacy is called
metaphysics only in quotation marks, but is called ontology without quotation
marks. It is also an attempt to get rid Greek and Latin philosophical terminol-
ogy for purely German terminology based on metaphors, along with neolo-
gisms that the German language allows but are difficult to translate into other
modern European languages. His attempt led philosophy along the tracks of
gnosis or Gnosticism.

The metaphors and neologisms contribute to a special atmosphere, and
some do not even hesitate to call it magical (Karl Jaspers). That atmosphere

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37   Ibid., 43.

has led and still leads many to find Heidegger's works very attractive.[38] Leaving aside the question of whether that opinion is correct, we cannot abandon the effort to verify (or prove false) the vision of the history of Western philosophy as that German philosopher sees it. So it is worthwhile to look at later works that directly discuss metaphysics.

There are three short texts that have the same title, "What is metaphysics?"[39] In the first, Heidegger calls upon Hegel at the very beginning. Hegel said that from the point of view of common sense, philosophy is 'the inverted world.'[40] Here, however, it is difficult to refrain from adding that Hegel's philosophy is an inverted world, but why should such an unusual description of philosophy be the point of reference when we are asking what metaphysics is? It is unusual because philosophy in its Greek source grew out of wonder at the world, and the world was not seen as topsy-turvy. Why, then, should Hegel be the symbol for understanding philosophy?

We find our answer when we look at how Heidegger described metaphysics. He set metaphysics apart from the particular sciences and focused not on being, but on nothingness. This is because Hegel, who is mentioned in the introduction of Heidegger's book, identified being with nothingness, Hegel is mentioned in the introduction. But Heidegger did not identify being with nothingness; he established nothingness before being, saying, "only on the ground of the original revelation of the nothing can human existence approach and penetrate beings."[41] That paradoxical procedure, in which Heidegger reversed the view of the medieval metaphysicians who said that being was what we know as first (*ens ut primum cognitum*) can be understood in the context of his interpretation of the term metaphysics.

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38   "[Heidegger] often proceeds as if he combined the seriousness of nihilism with the myst-
       agogy of a magician," Karl Jaspers, "Letter to the Freiburg University Denazification Com-
       mittee (December 22, 1945)," in *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard
       Wolin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 148–149.

39   The lecture "What is Metaphysics?" by Martin Heidegger was delivered July 24, 1929, as
       his inaugural lecture to the combined faculties of the University of Freiburg. He wrote
       a postscript to it for the fourth edition of the publication of the lecture (1943). For the
       fifth edition (1949), he added an introduction, entitled "Getting to the Bottom of Meta-
       physics [*Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik*]." while these are often presented
       in logical order, with Introduction first, all three were published in chronological order
       in his *Wegmarken* [Frontier Markers] (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), accessed,
       August 29, 2016, http://wagner.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/psychology/files/2013/01/
       Heidegger-What-Is-Metaphysics-Translation-GROTH.pdf.

40   Ibid.

41   Ibid.

> Our inquiry concerning the nothing should bring us face to face with metaphysics itself. The name 'metaphysics' derives from the Greek *metà tà physiká*. This peculiar title was later interpreted as characterizing the inquiry, the meta or trans extending out 'over' beings as such. Metaphysics is inquiry beyond or over beings which aims to recover them as such and as a whole for our grasp.[42]

It is hard to believe that in such a short fragment he could make such a gross misinterpretation! That is what happened though, and so all the more we should see why the exposition is superfluous. If we suppose that *metà* means *trans*, a going-beyond, which we recall is not entirely correct, then the going-beyond does not concern being (*to on*), but it concerns *physis*, that is, it concerns the world, including even the visible stars.[43] Being cannot be reduced to the world, because if in using the term we are to understand being, then the proper term would not be metaphysics but 'meta-ontics.' Heidegger not only changed the meaning of exposition of the term metaphysics as it was received in history, but he also trivialized the Neoplatonic position that speaks of going beyond being, but going toward the One, and not toward nothingness. The One is above being. It is greater than being, and being comes from the One. Being is produced by emanation along with Intellect. The attempt to build a system of metaphysics on nothingness, since it is unknown really what sort of concept of being is used, at best can produce surprising effects ('the topsy-turvy world'), but it falls outside of metaphysics and the historical currents of metaphysics.

When Heidegger changes how the classical concepts of metaphysics were presented, and how the conception of being was presented, which is connected with those classical concepts, he is shifting the center of gravity from God or the One, situated beyond created or emanated being, to human beings. Or to be precise, he is shifting it to what in the human dimension he calls *Dasein* (consciousness). The *Dasein* is not a being, and does not make a being, but it allows a being to become itself. "Only in the nothingness that is manifested in a consciousness does being in the whole achieve itself, as suited to the possibility that is most proper to itself, that is, in an infinite way."[44] That conscious being, human consciousness, is a sort of nothingness that allows being to manifest itself. Only then is the next step the act of philosophizing that has being as its object, but the starting point is nothingness in human consciousness (*Dasein*). Here Heidegger is working with a univocal conception of being,

42   Ibid.

43   Cf. this volume Part 1, Chap. 3.

44   Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?"

and that conception looks to the Scotist division of being into finite being and infinite being, but in Heidegger's conception, the infinite being (God) has been removed. Finite being remains, which is regarded as being in general, and *Dasein* remains, which is above being, like the Neoplatonic One, although being is neither created nor emanated, but it shows itself.

For the same reason, if we were to ask about the object of metaphysics in Heidegger's conception, it turns out that the object is first nothingness and afterwards being. This brings metaphysics close to ontology, because precisely in the framework of eighteenth-century ontology being and nothing are regarded as its object. Since humanity is the field in which being and nothingness are crystallized, or more precisely, in which human beings' consciousness is crystallized, we are dealing with a kind of ontological anthropology. Man (*Dasein*) does not make being but allows being to be made present. According to Heidegger, the Greek verb *einai* (to be), the Latin verb *esse*, and the German verb *sein*, should be translated as presence or coming-into-existence while ουσία is *parousia* (presence).[45] In this way metaphysics and the object of metaphysics are somehow treated as phenomenal: being is not in itself, but it is presented (made present) to someone.

There is one more passage in which Heidegger describes metaphysics and ontology and provides, at least at first glance, a sufficiently faithful interpretation:

> Metaphysics states what beings are as beings. It offers a *logos* (statement) about the *onta* (beings). The later title 'ontology' characterises its nature, provided, of course, that we understand it in accordance with its true significance and not through its narrow scholastic meaning. Metaphysics moves in the sphere of the *on he on*: it deals with beings as beings. In this manner, metaphysics always represents beings as such in their totality; it deals with the beingness of beings (the ουσία of the *on*). But metaphysics represents the beingness of beings [*die Seiendheit des Seienden*] in a two-fold manner: in the first place, the totality of beings as such with an eye to their most universal traits (*on katholou koinon*) but at the same time also the totality of beings as such in the sense of the highest and therefore Divine Being (*on katholon, akrotaton, theion*). In the metaphysics of Aristotle, the unconcealedness of beings as such has specifically developed in this twofold manner.[46]

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45   He was referring to Aristot., *Met.* 1003a 20–1012b 33, 1025b 5–1028a 5, 1059a 20–1069a 16; cf.
       Heidegger, *Existence and Being*.
46   Heidegger, *Existence and Being*.

Heidegger here expounds on the double aspect of Aristotle's metaphysics, first the universal properties of being, later called the transcendental properties (although we do not know why the metaphorical term feature had to be introduced here, since it is a question here of properties that permeate all being), and the second is the direction of the entire weight of the understanding of being to the first being who according to the analogy of attribution (which Aristotle called *pròs hen* or *eph'henós*) is a being in the highest meaning of the word. Although Heidegger speaks of the non-hiddenness of being as such, the Supreme Being is hidden from human beings, and the Supreme Being is known only indirectly:

> Metaphysics is in itself twofold, and at the same time in unity [it is] the truth of being in general and of being in the highest degree; it is such namely because it presents being qua being. By its essence it is at the same time ontology, in a narrower sense, and is theology. This onto-theological essence of philosophy proper (*prote philosophia*) is based most certainly in the way in which *on* opens to it, namely as *on*. The theological character of theology does not consist in the fact that ecclesiastical Christian theology later took over Greek metaphysics and transformed it. Rather, it consists in the way in which being since the beginning has unveiled itself as being.[47]

Here, Heidegger is trying to set the Greek and the Christian understanding of metaphysics in opposition to each other, as he thinks that medieval metaphysics remained under the influence of 'ecclesiastical theology.' It is a pejorative description, an epithet that calls to mind controversies during the Reformation when some wrote of the philosophy of the papists.[48] In this way Heidegger blurs the awareness of the methodological difference between philosophy and theology that was presented by Thomas, Scotus, and others, and he blurs most of the various conceptions of metaphysics. Also, in the case of the Greeks there is no talk of ontology in a narrower sense, because every consideration of being qua being leads toward the Absolute. Heidegger continues:

> It was this unconcealedness of beings that provided the possibility for Christian theology to take possession of Greek philosophy—whether for better or for worse may be decided by the theologians, on the basis of their experience of what is Christian; only they should keep in mind what

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47   Ibid.
48   Piotr Jaroszynski, *Science in Culture*, 83–85.

is written in the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians: '*ouhi emoranen o theos ten sophían tou kosmou*; Has not God let the wisdom of this world become foolishness?' (1 Cor. 1:20) The *sophía tou kosmou* [wisdom of this world], however, is that which, according to 1: 22, the *Ellenes zetousin* [the wisdom], that Greeks seek. Aristotle even calls the *próte philosophía* [philosophy proper] quite specifically *zetoumeni*—what is sought. Will Christian theology make up its mind one day to take seriously the word of the apostle and thus also the conception of philosophy as foolishness?[49]

It would be difficult to find a greater accumulation of abbreviations of thoughts and interpretations with regard to such important problems as the relations between Greek philosophy and Christianity, or between philosophy and theology. When Paul the Apostle used the word *sophía* he could not have been thinking of philosophy in general, not to mention Aristotle's metaphysics in particular, which, after all, he did not know. Instead, Paul was concerned with the Epicurean and Stoic schools.[50] The apostle was not opposed to attempts to

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49   Heidegger, *Existence and Being*.

50   John Paul II took up this problem in the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, where we read: "The Acts of the Apostles provides evidence that Christian proclamation was engaged from the very first with the philosophical currents of the time. In Athens, we read, Saint Paul entered into discussion with 'certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers' (17:18); and exegetical analysis of his speech at the Areopagus has revealed frequent allusions to popular beliefs deriving for the most part from Stoicism. This is by no means accidental. If pagans were to understand them, the first Christians could not refer only to 'Moses and the prophets' when they spoke. They had to point as well to natural knowledge of God and to the voice of conscience in every human being (cf. Rom 1:19–21; 2:14–15; *Acts* 14:16–17). Since in pagan religion this natural knowledge had lapsed into idolatry (cf. Rom 1:21–32), the Apostle judged it wiser in his speech to make the link with the thinking of the philosophers, who had always set in opposition to the myths and mystery cults notions more respectful of divine transcendence.

One of the major concerns of classical philosophy was to purify human notions of God of mythological elements. We know that Greek religion, like most cosmic religions, was polytheistic, even to the point of divinizing natural things and phenomena. Human attempts to understand the origin of the gods and hence, the origin of the universe find their earliest expression in poetry; and the theogonies remain the first evidence of this human search. But it was the task of the fathers of philosophy to bring to light the link between reason and religion. As they broadened their view to include universal principles, they no longer rested content with the ancient myths, but wanted to provide a rational foundation for their belief in the divinity. This opened a path which took its rise from ancient traditions but allowed a development satisfying the demands of universal reason. This development sought to acquire a critical awareness of what they believed in, and the

acquire natural knowledge of God. Heidegger presents a very simplified and tendentious interpretation of a very complex problem about which much was written in history, and he tints his position with irony and even bile. The connection between the word 'search' (*zetousin*) as it occurs in Aristotle and as it occurs in St. Paul already seems like manipulation. Aristotle used the word in connection with the fact that he was providing the scientific framework for knowledge, which cf had intrigued his predecessors who searched for answers to the question of what being is, and what substance is (*ti to on, ti esti he ousía*).[51] First philosophy was not merely a search. After all, Aristotle came to specific conclusions and presented answers, even the work as a whole did not fit in the framework of a system. As for the 'folly of the world,' here we are dealing with a powerful rhetorical figure the purpose of which was to show the greatness and wisdom of God, and was not intended as a critique of philosophy as the human effort to know reality. Such meditations on the meaning of Paul's words belong to theology, not to philosophy.

John Paul II reminded us of how St. Paul appreciated human knowledge oriented to wisdom when he wrote:

> In the first chapter of his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul helps us to appreciate better the depth of insight of the Wisdom literature's reflection. Developing a philosophical argument in popular language, the Apostle declares a profound truth: through all that is created the 'eyes of the mind' can come to know God. Through the medium of creatures, God stirs in reason an intuition of his 'power' and his 'divinity'(Rom 1:20). This is to concede to human reason a capacity which seems almost to surpass its natural limitations. Not only is it not restricted to sensory knowledge, from the moment that it can reflect critically upon the data of the senses, but, by discoursing on the data provided by the senses, reason can reach the cause which lies at the origin of all perceptible reality. In philosophical terms, we could say that this important Pauline text affirms the human capacity for metaphysical enquiry. According to the Apostle, it was part of the original plan of the creation that reason should without difficulty reach beyond the sensory data to the origin of all things: the Creator.

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concept of divinity was the prime beneficiary of this. Superstitions were recognized for what they were and religion was, at least in part, purified by rational analysis. It was on this basis that the Fathers of the Church entered into fruitful dialogue with ancient philosophy, which offered new ways of proclaiming and understanding the God of Jesus Christ"; cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference, 1998), §36.

51   Aristot., *Met.*, 1028a 10–1028b 8.

> But because of the disobedience by which man and woman chose to set themselves in full and absolute autonomy in relation to the One who had created them, this ready access to God the Creator diminished.[52]

Therefore only at the level of philosophical and theological interpretation does the whole picture of St. Paul's position emerge. His statements cannot be taken out of context or treated arbitrarily.

Heidegger repudiates medieval metaphysics and calls it ecclesiastical or dogmatic. That certainly would have brought him recognition or acclaim among groups close to Protestantism or anticlerical groups. When we analyze them more closely, we see that they are wrong. The terms ecclesiastical and dogmatic belong to the lexicon of philosophical correctness.

What is the result of Heidegger's critical analyses? If metaphysics falls, then ontology remains. Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and a series of his other works are dedicated to that ontology, which he calls fundamental ontology, because it is supposed to show how being is made present in a conscious being. Following the requirements of ontology, the conditions for the possibility of the making-present-of-being are placed on center stage. On the one hand, that is connected with the Kantian tradition, which based philosophical knowledge on a search for conditions, and on the other hand it is connected with the ontological tradition, where possibility is advanced to center stage. *Dasein* is translated sometimes as consciousness, and sometimes as being or entity. It is supposed to be a condition for the making-present of being, and only then can we speak of being and existence.[53] However, since being and existence are constituted at the level of *Dasein*, then one way or another they have a phenomenalistic character. This is the establishment of ontology in the place of metaphysics, and according to Heidegger metaphysics had forgotten about being over the course of history.[54] Fundamental ontology would restore being.[55]

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52   John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, §22.

53   "As being-here-this (*Da-sein*), entity is simply being. On the other hand, being 'needs' entity in order to be 'realized' at all. Every 'is' is first of all entity and is an entity. Only secondarily can we speak of the existence or reality of beings different from entity (or, beings *as* different from entity). Between an understanding of being and being itself, there is no simple relation of knowledge to a known object. Being is not an object, but 'the condition of the possibility' of the object as such"; Bogdan Baran, Foreword to Heidegger, *Bycie i czas* [Being and Time] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007), xvii.

54   Ibid., xxiii.

55   Heidegger is not going beyond ancient or medieval metaphysics so much as he is going beyond its Scotist version as presented by Suárez; cf. Blanchette, "Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology," 4.

By his oversimplified vision of the history of metaphysics, where thoughts are encrypted by metaphors, appeals to German core words, or neologisms, Heidegger's conception of metaphysics and ontology made it easy for many philosophers to dissociate themselves from classical metaphysics, and even from ontology, for the sake of an a-theoretical and a-historical way of cultivating philosophy. That consequently disturbs the source-conception of philosophy as the theoretical attitude, while drawing attention away from the world, reality, and being as the object of metaphysics. Heidegger's continuators were not especially interested in restoring metaphysics, but followed the motto that metaphysics should be overcome or rejected to make room for attitudes or currents that were more and more paraphilosophical, even if they were still called philosophy, such as the philosophy of encounter, where the interpersonal relation as the field where being and God are revealed (Emmanuel Levinas), or hermeneutics, for which reality is a text that must be submitted to a rather complex procedure of interpretation without end, and with no possibility of reaching things in themselves (Hans-Georg Gadamer). Human beings, consciousness, society, being, God, and signs all become the realm of philosophical inquiries as a special and peculiar world of interconnected references without objects, and which do not exist outside of themselves or outside of consciousness, and consciousness is understood in individual, supra-individual, or social terms.[56] That belonged more to ontology, which was sometimes call fundamental ontology or the analytics of the ontology of being, than to metaphysics.

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56   These ideas have their origin in Heidegger's philosophy. He "shows the constitution of man and being in such a way that neither being nor man are separate realities in it, but they form a fundamental unity that is the starting point for all their later theoretical interpretations (e.g., a psychological or physical interpretation)" P. Pasterczyk, "Hermeneutyka jako filozofia hermeneutyczna" [Hermeneutics as Hermeneutical Philosophy]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 4:386–387. Heidegger's philosophy, which is complicated enough at the terminological level, can be reduced to a poetic vision of man's world in which nothing is autonomous or independent, but the world is part of human consciousness (*Dasein*), and consciousness is part of the world. The world is composed of nature and culture, but Heidegger tries to say nothing about God's prsence, which does not mean that commentators have not tried in any case to find such presence; cf. E. Jungel, "Gott entsprechendes Schweigen? Theologie in der Nachbarschaft des Denkens von Martin Heidegger" [God Communicates in Silence? Theology in the Neighborhood Martin Heidegger's Thinking]. In *Martin Heidegger. Fragen an sein Werk. Ein Symposion* [Martin Heidegger: Questions on His Work. A Symposium], ed. Jürgen Busche, 37–45 (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1977). Krąpiec once asked Heidegger in person how he saw God's place in his philosophy. Heidegger answered the question with a question: "*Möchten Sie Tee oder Kaffee?*" (Would you like tea or coffee?).

If the term metaphysics remained in use, it was in a Kantian version, not in the classical version. If metaphysics was criticized, it was the metaphysics that was called traditional, and no one considered or made the intellectual effort to see that Wolff was different from Aristotle, and certainly was different from Thomas. In hermeneutics, which shifted the center of gravity from being to the sign (the text), philosophy could only be an imposed history of the interpretation of words or expressions (imposed in linear, spiraling, or circular way). That was not metaphysics, and the attempt to abandon metaphysics (the critique of metaphysics) would have to be more clearly defined for us to know what sort of metaphysics was in question, because it was not metaphysics in general, and the concept of traditional metaphysics was a complete misunderstanding, because it was identified with Wolff's ontology.[57] Finally, in order to criticize metaphysics one must be a metaphysician. The critique from hermeneutical positions in which it is assumed that everything is a sign cannot be valid if signless knowledge appears. Hermeneutics, which grew out of fundamental ontology, presupposes a restricted understanding of metaphysics in the Wolffian version. For this reason, classical metaphysics, which differs essentially from Wolff's metaphysics and the many varieties of modern scholastic metaphysics, is ignored.

Heidegger's fundamental ontology, since it is focused on human consciousness, allowed the emphasis to be shifted from the world to humanity, although not in the same way as Descartes's philosophy. Consciousness became the field where the world and human interpersonal relations were established. Heidegger did not devote much attention to the latter or to humanity's relation to God, and those questions became central for Emmanuel Lévinas. The key

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57   One example here would be Gadamer. Since Gadamer had received a more thorough historical and philosophical education (and knew Greek), he had all the information he needed to distinguish between Wolff's metaphysics and Aristotle's metaphysics, but did not do so. He cited the well known passage of *Metaphysics* IV where Aristotle shows the difference between the particular sciences, which have as their object "some sort of positive domain," and first philosophy, which is concerned with being. Gadamer said that metaphysics in the epoch of science is no longer meaningful, because "Kant, through his critique of the pure reason, that is, through his critique of the human ability to know on the basis of concepts as such, destroyed the previous traditional form of metaphysics with its division into cosmology, psychology, and theology"; cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Historia pojęć jako filozofia* [The History of Concepts as Philosophy], trans. K. Michalski, in *Rozum, słowo, dzieje. Szkice wybrane* [Reason, Word, History: Selected Essays], ed. Krzysztof Michalski (Warsaw: Państ. Instytut Wydawniczy, 1979), 91. This evidently concerns Wolff's ontology, which Kant destroyed, and why is it called traditional metaphysics in the context of Aristotle, who was cited earlier.

question was not the analysis of being, but the formation of human beings' human profile in their clash with other people, and ultimately with God. Lévinas belittled metaphysics in favor of religion and ethics, mainly in the context of genocide in the Second World War.[58] The treatment of ethics as first philosophy, although for other reasons, was not Lévinas's invention, because the Stoics had taken that position earlier.

This was an expression of how Western civilization broke away from its orientation to the disinterested and purely theoretical knowledge of truth. Without metaphysics, how can the difference between a thing and a person be explained? A bad critique is not enough to construct a personalistic theory of humanity. Without personalism, every system, including every system of thought, sooner or later must become totalitarian. The repudiation of all metaphysics is a misunderstanding, even if motivated by the noblest reasons. The type of metaphysics that must be restored is one in which human beings retain the status of beings, but as persons. On the other hand, the attempt to construct ontology on the basis of encounter as a relation between human beings risks disturbing the substantial subjectivity of humanity, reducing humanity despite many sublime ideas to the level of a relation, even if those relations are relations between human beings or relations to God. Human beings' ontological status as persons can only be defined in a system of metaphysics that has being as its object, not on the phenomenalistic level or in the realm of consciousness. Otherwise, human beings' individuality and real subjectivity would dissolve while remaining a correlate of the world or of supra-individual consciousness, and this would eliminate any possibility of seeing human beings as persons.

We should notice here that the controversy over metaphysics also has an ideological profile. It is an occasion to consider the past and Western civilization, whether it is a question of the special role of Greek culture or of Christian culture. The anti-metaphysical attitude at times is an expression of anti-Hellenism or anti-Catholicism, hence, the critique of metaphysics is not made from strictly philosophical positions, but from cultural positions. Heidegger certainly made that critique easier, as he was deeply immersed in Greek and in Catholic culture because of the formation he received when young. The result was that his critique of metaphysics had to sound very credible. Still, a real question remains. What sort of metaphysics did that thinker overcome? He only overcame the sort of metaphysics he knew, and only to the degree that the method he used allowed him to do so.

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58   Ferretti, *Ontologia e teologia in Kant*, 14.

Metaphysics as Ontology: Nicolai Hartmann

Nicolai Hartmann was an author who emerged from the circle of German philosophy and tried to build a new ontology. Initially he was influenced by neo-Kantianism (Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp) because he received his doctorate and habilitation at the University of Marburg. Later he turned toward the German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) and to Aristotle. Then he also turned toward phenomenology (Max Scheler).[1] When Hartmann abandoned neo-Kantianism and idealism, he wanted to develop a new realistic ontology that at the same time would be different from the 'old' ontology. Two questions are most important in this context. What did Hartmann understand as the old ontology? What was his conception of the new ontology?

His answer to the first question was this:

> We mean by it that theory of being which was dominant from Aristotle down to the expiration of Scholasticism. Although it produced a multitude of divergent varieties of thought and finally ran out in an incurable division of tendencies, it was uniform in its fundamentals, and to the thinkers of the modern age, who from several sides drew up a concentrated attack upon it, it presented a unified hostile camp.[2]

As we see, Hartmann was aware that there were different currents of metaphysics, but he did not see that they differed in essential ways from each other, just as Aristotle's theory of being differed essentially from that of Plotinus, Avicenna's theory of being from Averroes's theory of being, Thomas's theory of being from Scotus's theory of being, not to mention William of Ockham's theory of being. There was no single theory of being shared by all those thinkers, but their theories differed essentially.

In this case we must ask further what Hartmann understood by the old theory of being. Hartmann explains:

> The old theory of being is based upon the thesis that the universal, crystalized in the *essentia* as substantial form and comprehensible as concept, is the determining and formative core of things. Besides the

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1 Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 327–328.
2 Hartmann, *New Ways of Ontology*, 6.

> world of things, in which human beings, too, are encased, there is a world
> of essences which, timeless and immaterial, forms a kingdom of perfec-
> tion and higher being.[3]

In the above statement we find several philosophical currents and some rath-
er seriously imprecise formulations. There is no single old theory of being.
The first part of his statement concerns the Aristotelian conception of form,
but in the Latin version. Aristotle did not use the expression substantial
form, and there was no such expression in the Greek language, but the ex-
pression *forma substantialis* appeared first in Latin. When Aristotle spoke of
form (*eidos*) in the order of substance (*ousía*), it was not the internal shape
of things, but was the principle that determines the entire being, both from
the inside and from the outside, because only in that way could the form
be that whereby this concrete being in its internal and external complexity
could be one being, and not a being divided into form and matter, soul and
body. Meanwhile in Neoplatonism, which after all is still to be located in the
'old' theory of being, we are dealing with dualism. Both positions are essen-
tially different.

Generality is not crystallized in essence (*essentia*) as Hartmann would
have it, but it is connected with the human mode of knowledge, and then
with the human mode of speaking. Essence is not general. Essence in the
Aristotelian sense is concrete and individual, if by essence we understand
the form that constitutes a thing. Here there is nothing that would be thick-
ened or congealed, but we must look to the order of knowledge for generality
to appear.[4]

Finally, when Hartmann speaks of the world of essential qualities, he is
bidding farewell to Aristotle, although he did not indicate this directly, and
he is stepping into philosophy in the Platonic current, because it was there
that the separate existence of various essence appears independently of this
world. We can find the views of Avicenna and Scotus in this current when
they bring in essences as the third sphere of being, as third nature (*natura
tertia*), independent of real being and substantial being. They are essences in
themselves.

Thus the incoherence of the concept of the old theory of being qua being in-
creases, so if the new ontology is to be built as different from the old ontology,

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3   Ibid., 6–7.

4   The metaphor of thickening is misleading because it blurs the difference between the order
    of being and the order of knowledge. There is no generality at the level of being.

it is not a foregone conclusion how many elements of the old ontology the new ontology will or will not retain.

When Hartmann discusses medieval positions on essences, he moves from Aristotle to Platonism, but in such a way that Scholasticism as a whole seems to have shifted to Platonic positions:

> The most general traits of essence, that is, those that are shared by many kinds of *essentia*, cannot simply be gleaned from a survey of things. Here the Aristotelian epistemology did not offer the right lever, and soon Scholasticism espoused the Platonic idea of intuition (*intuitio*, *visio*). Philosophers became more and more used to subordinating the intellect to a superior faculty of insight to which they ascribed a direct contact with the highest ontologically determining formal elements.[5]

In this description, we are struck by the impersonal approach to Scholasticism, which evidently is the result of a superficial leveling of different positions. After all, Scholasticism as a whole did not accept the idea of a direct internal intuition, or that above discursive knowledge, human beings have a higher intuitive knowledge of essences. Such a position was typical of currents with a Platonic orientation, but not of currents that remained with Aristotle.

In the context of his understanding of Scholasticism, Hartmann raised the question of the place of deduction in the old ontology:

> Herewith the old ontology took on a deductive character. Once human reason feels itself to be in possession of the highest universals it is readily concluded that reason can actually 'derive' from these universals all that which it does not know how to extract from experience. In this manner, there arose that neglect of empirical knowledge and that luxuriant growth of a metaphysics deducing its conclusions from pure concepts which was first challenged by the later nominalism and finally defeated by the beginnings of modern natural science.[6]

This line of argument is most fitting, but it concerns the Avicennian-Scotist current, not Scholasticism as such, if within Scholasticism there were currents in which the scholastics held on to the principles of Aristotle and his theory that general concepts (essences) had their source in the human intellect not by way of a superior vision, but always gradually from sensory knowledge to the

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5   Ibid., 8.

6   Ibid., 8–9.

intellect by way of abstraction and induction. Hartmann in criticizing the old ontology is criticizing its Platonic current.

While he cautions that those are only 'summary' thoughts intended to protect him from mistakes, when he enters upon the task of building a new ontology he makes the same fundamental error when instead of speaking of ancient or medieval metaphysics he speaks of ontology.[7] That is a great difference, since strictly speaking ontology as ontology did not appear until the seventeenth century. According to Hartmann the history of ontology could be fit in one continuum from Aristotle to Wolff, and then the critique of the old theory of being could be made very easily.[8] Since Kant had already presented such a critique, apparently Hartmann did not consider Kant's limited knowledge of ancient and medieval philosophy. When Kant criticized metaphysics, as we have seen, he was criticizing the Wolffian version of metaphysics in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's version, because that was the only version he knew. In short, the picture of the old ontology as Hartmann understood it is oversimplified and even deformed, both with respect to what old included, and that it was not ontology but metaphysics.

What then is the new ontology that Hartmann proposed? He thought that the old metaphysics should be completely rejected: "It has become necessary, moreover, to exclude every sort of thesis which might serve as a disguise for an outdated metaphysics."[9] The metaphor ('disguise') is rather out of place, especially when the concept of the old ontology or the obsolete metaphysics is so imprecise and superficial. Hartmann himself admits that it is not so simple to overcome the "traditional ruts of thought." He thought that those ruts included an appeal to essence, which claims to be an independent generality and to be fundamental, and after which appears the postulate of the capacity for deduction.[10] Such a conception of the point of reference, that is, the old ontology, restricts how the other currents of ancient and medieval metaphysics can be understood, but Hartmann was engaging in polemics only with a narrow understanding of metaphysics, which evidently allowed the old ontology to be put under Kantian criticism, to which he readily turned.[11]

What sets the framework for the new ontology? Hartmann appealed first of all to new categories saying, "the categories with which the new ontology deals

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7   Ibid. 8–10.

8   "From Aristotle to the Christian world, ontology wanted to be the 'science about being as such'"; cf. Hartmann, *Jak w ogóle możliwa jest krytyczna ontologia?*, 7.

9   Hartmann, *New Ways of Ontology*, 11.

10   Ibid.

11   Ibid., 13–14.

are won neither by a definition of the universal nor through derivation from a formal table of judgments. They are rather gleaned step-by-step from an observation of existing realities."[12]

Therefore the new categories are supposed to determine a new ontology. Then the following question arises. Why start from categories, if the main object of ontology is the most important, that is, being or the concept of being, or something that would correspond to such an object? For the construction of a new ontology, a new conception of its main object must be proposed, and one should not appeal to categories, which are secondary. Are the categories that Hartmann proposed really something new? It is hard to say, since Hartmann mentioned two ways to draw out categories, and neither way corresponds to the method that was used by Aristotle, the author of the philosophical theory of categories. Aristotle did not get the categories by defining what is general nor from a formal table of judgments, but the latter were Kant's invention. For his part, Hartmann spoke of deriving them from real relations. Why would he derive them from relations? What does real mean if we have not already said what reality is, and so, what being qua being is? Meanwhile, for Hartmann the key question is the definition or description of categories and in this Kant's influence is expressed, even though the Kantian a priori categories were abandoned.

Hartmann's plan was different from Kant's. Hartmann explained, "but ontology is not concerned with knowledge, much less with mere judgments, but with the object of knowledge insofar as this object is at the same time 'transobjective,' that is, independent of whether or to what extent being is actually transformed into an object of knowledge."[13] At that point, Hartmann appealed to being through its confrontation with being as the object of knowledge, indicating that being is something more than that object. Thus, we can ask, how do we know that such a being exists, or what being means in general? Hartmann does not take up those questions directly, but he focuses on the problem of the categories and on the problem of the difference between the principles of being and the principles of knowledge.[14] The latter problem led him to the point

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12   Ibid.

13   Ibid., 15.

14   "The principles of the object in its very being are in no way *eo ipso* also cognitive
        principles. In some fields they can be quite heterogeneous, as the manifold admixtures of
        the unknowable in nearly all basic problems of philosophy amply prove. From this alone
        it follows that the principles of being cannot be a priori principles of our intellect, that
        they, as a matter of fact, are just as indifferent to the dividing line between the knowable
        and the unknowable as the being whose principles they are"; ibid.

where, not having a prior developed conception of being, he had to fall into the trap of speaking about what is unknowable at the level of the fundamental problems of philosophy. This happened because the concept of knowability was built not on the concept of being, but on the concept of object. From object to being there is no passage.

Hartmann tried to reverse the situation and to regain the categories of being. He said that we arrive at knowledge about the categories through an analysis of objects that we can apprehend. Here, the categories of being appear first, and only then are the cognitive categories inferred from them.[15] That was supposed to give the advantage to ontology in the theory of knowledge. According to Hartmann, the categories of being were discovered by way of categorical analysis, which was known to the ancient philosophers, and had been applied since Descartes's time in modern philosophy. At this point we must ask, on the one hand, about the 'novelty' of that ontology, since the method was already known long ago. On the other hand, we must ask whether we are dealing with a vicious circle, since the categories were discovered by categorical analysis. It turns out that human experience was the field in which the categories were discovered, and human experience here is understood in a very broad sense: the experience of quotidian reality, of practical life, scientific life, philosophical life, including human efforts in thinking, tests, failures, and revisions.[16] In fact experience presented in this way is understood in a very broad way, and at the same time it should be emphasized that it is understood rather fluidly, if not arbitrarily. Why aren't moral experience, artistic experience, and religious experience included? They are also important experiences. On the other hand, the question is still open: what ontological status does the object of those various experiences possess, because experience does not resolve what sort of being its object is?

Hartmann understands analysis as a procedure, saying, "the categories are drawn from the content of knowledge such as it has emerged from the whole field of scientific research. That means that they are drawn from our knowledge of objects; in other words, they are taken from the object itself in so far as it has disclosed itself at a certain stage of scientific knowledge."[17] In other words, analysis does not directly concern being, but concerns 'pure' contents that are 'somehow' contained in being. Where are the contents taken from? Do the contents not sometimes correspond to essences taken in themselves, which Hartmann renounced? What sort of description is it when he says, "they

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15   Ibid., 17.

16   Ibid.

17   Ibid., 18.

are contained somehow in being," when we do not know what being is, or even more so, how we can move from the contents to being.

Hartmann's new ontology would seem to be a novelty in relation to how he understood metaphysics and ontology, especially in terms of history. Unfortunately his grasp of this was selective and superficial, and in many cases he misses the point, especially when it was a question of a strictly metaphysical problem such as the conception of being or the transcendentals. Hartmann simply ignored those matters and focused instead on the problem of essences and categories. That shows that he was grappling with Kantianism more than with an attempt to look to the great metaphysical tradition in which the question of being qua being first arose.

Analytic Philosophy: A Metaphysics of Conceptual Schemata

C.D. Broad was one of the more important early representatives of analytic philosophy. He thought that philosophy was composed of two parts. The first part was critical philosophy, and the second was speculative philosophy.[1] Critical philosophy studies fundamental concepts such as relations, causality, and substance, to which the particular empirical sciences look but which those sciences do not analyze because those concepts are not the proper object of those sciences. Broad thought that logic was the main domain of philosophy that made such inquiries. Logic is the first philosophy, and it is thereby also metaphysics. Logic analyzes the fundamental concepts and propositions that the particular sciences treat as assumptions. Strictly speaking, metaphysics thus understood is formal ontology rather than metaphysics in the classical sense.[2] It is closer to Kant than to Aristotle. This is all the more the case since formal ontology in turn is supposed to be an introduction to speculative philosophy, which investigates reality as it appears in human experience. In this department of philosophy, as well, there is no room for metaphysics as the science about being qua being.

R.G. Collingwood was another thinker in the circle of British philosophy. Collingwood thought that the concept of being arose by way of abstraction. Abstraction brings the concept of being to nothingness. From this he concluded that such a system of metaphysics has no object. There is no science concerning being qua being, because pure being is identified with nothingness. The investigation of the assumptions of spontaneous and scientific knowledge is all that is left for metaphysics.[3] Collingwood's position on the object of metaphysics obviously is situated in the tradition of abstractionism, which is so typical of a univocal approach to being. It is clear that

1 Cf. C.D. Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy," in vol. 1 of *Contemporary British Philosophy 1st–2d ser. By J.B. Baillie [and others]*. 2 vols, ed. John H. Muirhead (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1924–1925), 7; V. Velarde Mayol, "El concepto de metafísica en la filosofía analítica" [The Concept of Metaphysics in Analytical Philosophy], in Gracia, *Concepciones de la metafísica*, 312.

2 Mayol, "El concepto de metafísica en la filosofía analítica," 312–313.

3 Robin George Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 4.

Collingwood closely followed Hegel, and under Hegel's influence, he formed his entire philosophy, except in the case of the concept of being, there, he drew other consequences from abstraction. He no longer saw any place for dialectics, which would allow a special play of being with non-being, but he simply eliminated metaphysics concerning being qua being from the purview of philosophy. But room remained for metaphysics in Collingwood's sense as absolute.

Aristotle's error was that he gave an absolute rank to premises that were merely historical. In this way, Collingwood connected Hegel (an abstract concept of Being) with Marx (the idea that truth has a historical and sociological dimension), and that had to lead to metaphysical relativism.[4] That relativism was a consequence of abstractionism, which lead to an empty concept of being and had the result that the content of that concept could not be filled in confrontation with reality, but only in confrontation with the history of human philosophical views.

W.V.O. Quine also presented a version of ontological relativism, but it was based on his views in logic and semantics. First of all, he identified 'is' with 'exists.'[5] In the case of fictitious beings, or even contradictory beings, Quine followed Frege and made a distinction between meaning and designation. The word 'Pegasus' has meaning, but it does not designate any being.[6] The ontology that Quine presented was supposed to be the simplest ontology possible, and also sufficiently useful. No ontology depends on reality, but every ontology depends on the context of theory and language and can be changed when we find a better ontology.[7] Quine's arguments were definitely made from a metalogical point of view, and so from the point of view of a reflection on logic and not on being. For this reason his arguments may be called ontology, but certainly cannot be called metaphysics.[8]

4   Ibid., 55–70; Mayol, "El concepto de metafísica en la filosofía analítica," 316–321.

5   W.V.O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 1–5; Mayol, "El concepto de metafísica en la filosofía analítica," 322.

6   Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 9.

7   Mayol, "El concepto de metafísica en la filosofía analítica," 324–328.

8   Quine joined ontology with logic and mathematics; cf. Lewis Edwin Hahn and Paul Arthur Schilpp, "Autobiography of W.V. Quine," in *The Philosophy of W.V. Quine*, eds. Hahn and Schilpp, 3–48 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1988), 20, 28. As for his studies at Harvard University, he became familiar with the philosophy of Plato, Leibniz, and Kant, but he most strongly emphasized logic. Quine was aware that more was happening in logic in Europe, including Poland, where he traveled to have discussions for six weeks with Alfred Tarski, Stanisław Leśniewski, and Jan Łukasiewicz in Warsaw; ibid., 9, 13.

In analytic philosophy, there was an attempt to rehabilitate metaphysics within the framework of the "metaphysics of conceptual schemata."[9] This is rather surprising, since analytic philosophy, according to its program, is not concerned with learning about reality or about being qua being, but about the analysis of language and about increasing the precision of concepts. The result would be a critique of metaphysics, rather than its rehabilitation, if only because metaphysical concepts are not univocal.

It turns out that at least some analytic philosophers want to return to metaphysics, albeit a special version. Is the version they seek so special that it should even be called 'metaphysics'? The new metaphysics, called the metaphysics of conceptual schemata, is supposed to be a continuation of Kant's philosophy, and therefore the center of gravity is shifted from reality to the categories of the human cognitive faculties, because those categories are the object of our knowledge. A basic question arises: Why should such an approach be called metaphysics at all, and not, for example, 'critical philosophy,' 'anthropology,' or 'gnoseology'? Reality, as we know it, if the arguments are right, is not truly reality, but a construct in which forms or concepts, coming from human beings and not found already present in reality, play the predominant role. The object of knowledge can be called an object but cannot be called reality, because it is not reality since it was constructed with the participation of the subject. Therefore, the following questions are well justified. Why should that type of knowledge be called metaphysics? What is metaphysical in this case?

Someone might say that the descriptions presented in traditional metaphysics arose somehow ex post facto in relation to the metaphysics of conceptual schemata. In such a case, we should examine how one of the major authors and representatives of the metaphysics of conceptual schemata sees the question. We are referring to P.F. Strawson, who is also one of the most important representatives of analytic philosophy. In the introduction to his most prominent work, *Individuals*, based on lectures given in Oxford in the years 1954–1955, he writes: "Metaphysics has often been revisionary, but more rarely descriptive. Descriptive metaphysics has been satisfied with describing the real structure of our thinking about the world, while revisionary metaphysics is concerned with creating a better structure."[10]

Strawson in general does not use the terms 'traditional metaphysics' or 'classical metaphysics,' but only speaks of descriptive and revisionary metaphysics.

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9   Tadeusz Szubka, "Metafizyka schematów pojęciowych" [Metaphysics of Conceptual Schemata], in *Metafizyka w filozofii* [Metaphysics in Philosophy], eds. A. Maryniarczyk and K. Stępień (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu 2004), 411.

10   Peter Frederick Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9.

He does not use the first two terms because he does not think that metaphysics as the science concerning being has been cultivated in western culture since centuries ago. The concept of metaphysics as the science concerning being is absent in Strawson's work.[11] What, then, does Strawson support?

The subtitle of his work clearly shows that he supports descriptive metaphysics. How, then, would there be any difference between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics? Descriptive metaphysics shows the structures of our thought as our thought actually runs its course in common-sense knowledge, while revisionary metaphysics provides new structures of thought. Someone might suppose that while revisionary metaphysics is part of a current that goes back to the seventeenth century, when philosophers had the ambition to create constantly newer systems and the apogee occurred with the systems of the German idealists of the nineteenth century, descriptive metaphysics is most inclined to know reality, not to create a reality, even if it is knowledge of our knowledge of the world. It is nothing of the sort. Although descriptive metaphysics describes the structures of our thought, those structures form known reality. That is not a problem for Strawson, and the constructive character of our knowledge is so evident to him that he does not hesitate to include the philosophy of Aristotle and the philosophy of Kant together in descriptive metaphysics: "We may state in general that Descartes, Leibniz, and Berkeley make revisions, while Aristotle and Kant make a description."[12]

According to Strawson, Kant and Aristotle treated metaphysics as analysis aimed to "uncover the most general properties of our conceptual structure."[13] It is hard to believe, but true, that this British philosopher, who took up metaphysics as his occupation, was unable to tell the difference between Kant and Aristotle, and when he wrote a work in the field that he called metaphysics, he did not quote Aristotle's works even once, not even Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[14] Strawson's knowledge of the history of philosophy may only go back as far as Descartes. Therefore, it was easy for him to confuse Kant with Aristotle and to say that both were engaged in descriptive metaphysics. In that case, it

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11   So we may ask whether it was a deliberate act of overlooking, or simply a lack of knowledge.

12   Strawson, *Individuals*, 9.

13   Ibid., 9.

14   In the only note in which the name of Aristotle appears, Strawson engages in a discussion with Aristotle on concrete things, including "phenomena and events" that are "less substantial" that the substances Aristotle mentioned, and which could also be regarded as independent concrete things; cf. ibid., 170n11. It is too bad that the author in his discussion with Aristotle did not cite any source text.

would be difficult to hold further discussion on metaphysics and the object of metaphysics.

We now turn to an author mentioned earlier, Tadeusz Szubka, who has tried to defend the metaphysics of conceptual schemata. Szubka lists two varieties of that metaphysics. The first recognizes the existence of only one conceptual schema common to the entire human race, while the second insists that there are many such schemata and that they are liable to change.[15] In the second case, different variations appear. Collingwood thinks that metaphysics is a historical discipline; Quine says that theories can be interpreted by looking to various ontologies; and Putnam says that when we explain reality we can draw on various conceptual schemata. Basically, it is not a matter here so much of a relativism as of a pluralism of these schemata.[16] What are the objections of the defenders of traditional metaphysics to the various versions of the metaphysics of conceptual schemata? How do the defenders of the metaphysics of conceptual schematic respond to those objections?

In the article discussed, three objections are present. The first objection is that the metaphysics of conceptual schemata is incoherent because, on the one hand, its supporters think that we do not have access to reality. On the other hand, they say that we have access to conceptual schemata, which are a part of reality. The second objection is that the metaphysics of conceptual schemata cannot be called metaphysics, since that system of metaphysics investigates the structure of human thought, and metaphysics in the proper sense investigates the structure of the world. The third objection is that the metaphysics of conceptual schemata presupposes dualism in which, on the one hand, there is some 'raw material,' and on the other hand, there are the conceptual schemata that shape that raw material.[17] Before we look at the responses to those objections, we should note that it is unknown, properly speaking, which conception of reality we are dealing with here, and whether in the metaphysics of conceptual schemata such a neutral conception can be developed. Also, we may have the impression that some of the objections addressed to the metaphysics of conceptual schemata are formulated in a purely academic way, and even in a dialectical way to provide an occasion for exercises in philosophical eristics.

In the first objection, we find that the status of reality as independent of the knowing subject is confused with the structure of the cognitive powers. Reality is understood in merely hypothetical terms in the framework of philosophical

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15   Szubka, "Metafizyka schematów pojęciowych," 413.

16   Ibid., 414.

17   Ibid., 416–417.

speculations. In the third objection, the point of reference is not classical metaphysics, but dualism generated by Descartes's philosophy.

The second objection stands as the soundest. It is obviously formulated in a rather simplified way, if not wrongly, because metaphysics in the classical sense investigates being qua being, of which the world is only one part, and here it not merely a question of structure, although at least a certain intuitive difference between the one and the other system of metaphysics is preserved. Here is the response we hear to the second objection:

> The second objection has great persuasive power, but a closer consideration of it shows that it is based on a dichotomy: the conceptual schema— the thing in itself. Meanwhile for two basic reasons it is a problematic dichotomy, because as it speaks of a conceptual schema and its elements, it does not describe it in separation from the domain of application, but when we speak of the concepts that compose it we are also speaking of that to which those concepts refer.... Moreover, despite general opinion, the second member of the dichotomy is not self-evident and the analysis of it gives rise to many problems.[18]

Thus, there are two reasons why the objections to the metaphysics of conceptual schemata miss the mark. First, a conceptual schema constitutes part of the field to which it refers, that is, the world. Moreover, the fact that the conceptual schema refers to the world is not the only concern, but it constitutes the world, that is, the schema here performs a creative role. Conceptual schemata are a priori categories, not the result of abstraction. They do not come from things in themselves. They are an endowment of human cognitive faculties, whether in an absolute sense (as in Kant or Strawson), or in a pluralistic sense (as in Quine). The main problem here is whether, in metaphysics, we know the world, or know our ideas about the world. In the case of the metaphysics of conceptual schemata, we know our concepts about the world, not the world in itself, whose existence and endowment of content would be independent of us. In the case of classical metaphysics it is a matter of knowing reality, which is not an effect of human operations or cognitive projections.

Second, the remark that the structure of the world is not self-evident, and the analysis of it "gives rise to many problems" seems out of place in metaphysical inquiries. Knowledge of the structure of the world, if the world is a very complex reality, must be difficult and various interpretations must arise, because if the structure of the world were self-evident at the starting point,

18   Ibid., 418.

philosophy would be unnecessary. This reservation is somewhat out of place, especially with regard to metaphysics, since beginning with Aristotle it has been recognized that this kind of knowledge is the most difficult, and therefore it comes after learning about physics.

Perhaps the supporters of the metaphysics of conceptual schemata have concocted the objections and do not answer them, because they are not objections that have been a part of the discussions that have been going on for centuries.

It is interesting, even paradoxical, that the supporters of the metaphysics of conceptual schemata, so sensitive about precision in language and about methodological rigor, are rather insouciant about including God in their reflections. God appears somewhat *ex machina* there. We learn from Michael Dummett:

> God does not apprehend the world from some specific point of view and is not located in one or another place. He knows the world not by concepts, which are essentially connected with the ways whereby things act on the senses, but directly and at the same time, absolutely comprehending all truths. Thus there are all grounds for identifying the way God understands the world with the conception of reality in itself.[19]

The attempt to salvage the world that is independent of human knowledge, the world of things in themselves, ends right where it began, with Descartes: God is the guarantee that such a world exists. Where does God come from in Dummett's thought? How does that philosopher know that God exists, what God's essence is, how God knows, or acts? It can only be a working hypothesis, but then the author's beliefs in the existence of things in themselves have twofold hypothetical value.

The metaphysics of conceptual schemata practiced by some representatives of analytic philosophy is called metaphysics probably by extension. In its presuppositions, that system is primarily located in the Kantian tradition where the center of gravity is in the discovery of the a priori conditions of our knowledge. Those conditions constitute the known object, and that object in this context can be called the world, but only in quotation marks, if the initial or common-sense understanding of the world in our knowledge refers to

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19   Michael Dummett, "The Intelligibility of Eucharistic Doctrine," In *The Rationality of Religious Belief. Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, eds. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 254; cf. Szubka, "Metafizyka schematów pojęciowych," 421–422.

something that exists independently of us that we find already there as existing. Meanwhile, Kant appeals to the Stoic division of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic. He thinks that that was the whole of ancient philosophy and introduces metaphysics through the side door as pure philosophy independent of experience and focused on the discovery of a priori principles.[20] If there is no object broader than the world (being qua being), and if there is no supreme being above the world (God), then the new aspect that would set metaphysics apart could only be the subjective conditions for knowledge. Why would that be called metaphysics?

The answer is obvious. It is ignorance of the history of metaphysics in its strictly philosophical dimension. The term metaphysics is so enigmatic that unless one knows its exact genesis, in using the term one may suggest something unusual, mysterious or occult, something new, but at the price of abandoning the two most typical features of the object of metaphysical knowledge as that object has been shaped over the centuries, namely that it is knowledge of being, and not of our ideas about being, and that it is knowledge that opens the way to rational knowledge about the Absolute, even if indirectly. As soon as metaphysics has as its object the human mode of knowledge, specifically, knowledge of the world, it loses everything that sets metaphysics apart from other domains of philosophy and science. Kant built metaphysics on the Stoic schema of the division of the sciences in which there was no place for metaphysics. Hence, his metaphysics loses any connection with the historical understanding of metaphysics, and so the term is used in a completely arbitrary manner, because it is not metaphysics.

The analytic philosophers followed Kant and built a system of a priori categories; but the idea remained the same, that metaphysics does not investigate things, but investigates the human manner of knowing. At that moment, for historical reasons, and not with regard to the solutions and beliefs of philosophers, such an object does not have the qualifications that knowledge concerning it could be called metaphysics. Various conceptions of being can be accepted and have been accepted. As long as being was recognized as the

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20   Kant writes, "Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: physics, ethics, and logic. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the thing and one cannot improve upon it"; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Allen W. Wood and J.B. Schneewind (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 3. This ignorance of ancient philosophy, not to mention medieval philosophy, is astonishing among the classical figures of modern philosophy. The Stoics did not know Aristotle's metaphysics or his division of the sciences, and they chose pantheism, and so physics as the science of reality had to be the most important science. There could be no place for metaphysics in such a picture of the world.

object of metaphysics, it was metaphysics; but if being ceases to be the object, it is no longer metaphysics, but perhaps some type of philosophy that should be called by a new name. In the case of the Kantian current to which the metaphysics of conceptual schemata belongs, there is no single aspect from the point of view of the object of knowledge that would justify the use of the term metaphysics.

If the object is the world then it is too narrow, and the science concerning that object, as in the Stoics, can be called physics (or the philosophy of nature), not metaphysics, which has as its object being qua being. If the object consists in conceptual schemata, then it is *de facto* the investigation of human cognitive faculties, and not of reality that is transcendent to humanity. If the object is God, then God appears as a hypothesis, an intellectual experiment to help us understand in explaining how things in themselves can be entirely known, but that is not the God of metaphysics. When metaphysics aims at God, it starts from real states that we know in reality around us.

In every respect, the use of the expression 'metaphysics of conceptual schemata' by the analytic philosophers is an abuse of metaphysics. There is no such metaphysics, although there is certainly a philosophy of conceptual schemata, but the philosophy of conceptual schemata is not metaphysics.

Metaphysics or Ontology of Process?

In process philosophy, started by Alfred North Whitehead, the term 'metaphysics of process' is used. Charles Hartshorne used the term, and according to him, it is "the discipline that searches for a priori propositions about what exists."[1] That is a meta-objective definition of metaphysics. On the one hand it could be located in the tradition of Kant (as it concerns what is a priori). But on the other hand, it is located in the analytic tradition (as it concerns propositions) and the a priori elements are understood differently than in Kant because those elements are supposed to be propositions that cannot be negated by any facts.[2] This philosophy is not another variety of Kantianism, if we are looking for what is a priori, and so, it is independent of experience. If Hartshorne thinks that the concepts and judgments of metaphysics have an empirical genesis, then their a priori aspect is limited to being independent of experience, not in the sense of origin, but in the sense of binding power. Experience cannot refute those judgments, and so all the more they do not have to conform to experience. At this point, the category of the a priori means the same as the category of possibility: if something is possible, it has its reflection in the real, and if something is real then it must also be possible. Reality does not render possibility or the a priori false, as Hartshorne understands the a priori.[3] Thus, we may ask, why in such a case, should we appeal to the concept of the a priori?

The category of possibility is enough, and that category belongs in ontology, not in metaphysics. If possibility comes into play here, then the word exists used in the definition of metaphysics is also misleading. Real existence is affirmed in existential judgments and is not derived from a priori categories. If existence is supposed to be derived in an a priori manner, that is, if it supposed to include the possible, then we are dealing with a sort of existence that is only a mode of a possible essence, but is not real existence. For that reason, P. Gutowski's statement is surprising when he says that in its:

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1 Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1970), 19.

2 Ibid., 19.

3 In Kant, 'a priori' referred not only to the universal validity of judgments, but also to their source, which was not '*empiria*,' (empirical) but the mind; cf. Tatarkiewicz, vol. 1 of *Historia filozofii*, 165.

most general outline, the plan for metaphysics presented by Hartshorne does not differ from traditional conceptions of the discipline. He would certainly agree with Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, and Spinoza, that metaphysics is first philosophy, whose task it is to seek the most general ideas or first principles concerning reality."[4]

Two things are striking in this appraisal. First, there is no respect for the essential difference between the metaphysics of Aristotle and the metaphysics of Thomas, where despite some continuation of thought, we are dealing with another conception of being. Second, such different conceptions of philosophy as that of Thomas, Descartes, and even Spinoza are lumped together. Finally, Hartshorne's process philosophy is regarded as the same as the philosophy of the other philosophers mentioned. However, we see at once that they are diametrically opposed.

Aristotle and Thomas did not look for a priori propositions about what exists or what is a being, but propositions were only a way of speaking about what is known (reality), and they were not the object of knowledge. Finally, the search for principles as Aristotle and Thomas understood it is not the same as a search for the most general ideas.

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4 P. Gutowski, "Koncepcja metafizyki procesu" [Conception of the Metaphysics of Process], in *Studia metafilozoficzne*, eds. A.B. Stępień and Tadeusz Szubka (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwesytetu Lubelskiego, 1993), 137.

Negative Ontology: Adorno

Marxism had its origins in Hegel's system, but it was not a philosophy in the strict sense as theoretical knowledge. On the contrary, Marx strongly condemned theoretical knowledge. He treated theoretical knowledge in terms of history and sociology. Theoretical knowledge was an instrument of a certain social class (the nobility, aristocracy, or bourgeoisie) to fight for its privileges and authority over other classes. The logical conclusion was that the cultivation of theoretical philosophy, including metaphysics, is an expression of support for someone and opposition to someone in the ongoing class struggle.[1] Since theoretical philosophy was the privilege of the bourgeoisie, it should be destroyed.

Marx's followers were divided into many currents. One current became dominant by taking power. That was the entire bloc of Communist states in which the Soviet Union had first place. The struggle with theoretical philosophy there, for the most part, had an administrative dimension and the level of argumentation was limited to ideological slogans adorned in rather unsophisticated and even vulgar metaphors.[2] The situation was different in the West, where the Marxists' struggle for power was planned out into longer phases. That meant that they had to engage in discussion with philosophy at the theoretical level. The Frankfurt School was the main group that played a key role in promoting Marxism in Western society in all the humanities. They promoted their ideas in sociology, the theory of culture, and philosophy. We find an exposition of philosophy, including metaphysics and ontology, mainly in the works of Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

We should first establish how Adorno understood metaphysics. In his best known work, *Negative Dialectics*, where he often speaks of metaphysics, the meaning of the term depends heavily on the context. He did not present a

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1 "Pre-Marxist philosophy as whole, regardless of its direction, from affiliation to the camp of materialism or idealism, was the philosophy of the ruling classes, philosophy that reflected their interests and aspirations. All pre-Marxist philosophy was thus an ideological weapon of the ruling classes"; Adam Schaff, *Teoria poznania* [Theory of Knowledge], 3rd ed. (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960, 13. OCLC: 749208235.

2 One example could be the *Krótki słownik filozoficzny* [Short Dictionary of Philosophy], eds. M.M. Rozental and P. Iudin, translated from the fourth supplemented and revised Russian edition, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1955. OCLC: 11109887.

definition of metaphysics and saw no difference between metaphysics and ontology. When he discussed various conceptions of metaphysics, he considered several authors who in most cases were more representative of ontology than of metaphysics, mainly Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Husserl, and Heidegger.

Adorno used the formulation 'traditional metaphysics,' but did that mean classical metaphysics, which started with Greek philosophy and took an organized form because of Aristotle, and was then developed by ancient and medieval philosophers, mainly by commentary? That is rather unlikely because Adorno's knowledge of philosophy did not extend that far.

Adorno described the views of Henri Bergson and Husserl and said that although those philosophers were the main representatives of philosophical modernity, they returned to traditional metaphysics.[3] What would be the expression of their return? Adorno wrote:

> Bergson for the needs of what is non-conceptual, in a stroke created another type of knowing.... All knowing, including Bergsonian knowing, requires contempt for rationality, especially when reality is supposed take concrete shape. Duration, raised to the rank of an absolute, pure becoming, and *actus purus*, suddenly move into the same non-temporality that Bergson criticized in metaphysics beginning with Plato and Aristotle.[4]

Adorno's point is that when Bergson criticized the views of Aristotle and Plato, he was bringing something into philosophy that matched the concept he was criticizing. That was pure act, which in Bergson's case was duration. According to Adorno, Husserl gave the rank of a 'being' to something "that does not differ from ordinary general concepts."[5] Thus traditional metaphysics seeks the Absolute and essences, but philosophical modernity was supposed to have gone beyond that.

Does traditional metaphysics have being as its object? The answer is yes, but that also belongs to the past. Adorno explains, "to require philosophy to discuss questions of being or other major topics of Western philosophy means to surrender to the primitive belief in those topics."[6] This is more than an assertion or diagnosis. Here we are dealing with a conception of science and rationality that pushes metaphysics back from the level of knowledge to level

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3 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 8.

4 Ibid., 8–9.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 16–17.

of faith, moreover, that faith is supposed to have a primitive character, and it is fetishism.[7] This historically oriented philosophy, which looks to Comte's formulation of periods, which was intended to discredit a specific domain of knowledge, metaphysics, by a selection of words (epithets) rather than arguments, was very ideological. Metaphysics, says Adorno, is fetishism. The problem with this is that Adorno did not know Aristotle's metaphysics, and he did not understand what fetishism is. Fetishism is the culture of inanimate objects in the belief that they have magical features. When Adorno chose that conception of metaphysics, he was looking to the Neoplatonic version of metaphysics in the form of theurgy and magic, although he was not fully aware of this. That was not traditional metaphysics, but an oriental version of metaphysics.

The motif of traditional metaphysics would return when Adorno discussed Heidegger's ontology. Adorno here raised the problem of the 'secularization of theological contents.' He thought that as a result of the Enlightenment, those theological contents had been eliminated from the objective sphere, only to find support in subjectivity (the way that Kant chose). The next step was the 'demythologization of subjectivity,' whereby "the opportunity to rescue that theological content fell almost to zero."[8] With no concern for the differences between mythology and theology, Adorno tried to track down anything that would indicate the presence of the divine in philosophy, in order to reject firmly such philosophy. Adorno was glad that Heidegger rejected traditional metaphysics, namely, the metaphysics that concerns being and God:

> Heidegger's position is true insofar as it is subordinated to that, while rejecting traditional metaphysics; it becomes untrue when Heidegger, again not differing so much from Hegel, speaks as if that which required an account was directly present. The philosophy of being disappoints us when it requires some meaning to be in being, a meaning which according to philosophy's own testimony has been destroyed by thinking—a meaning to which, after all, being as such also as a conceptual reflection is henceforth thought. The meaninglessness of the word 'being,' which common sense so easily mocks, should not blamed either on insufficiency of thought, nor on irresponsible haste in thought. The impossibility for the mind to apprehend or produce a positive meaning is reflected in this; the mind was the medium of the objective trivialization of this meaning.[9]

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7   Ibid., 97.

8   Ibid., 98.

9   Ibid.

Here Adorno was not so much attacking the theological dimension of metaphysics as he was trying to take away from being, after the detheologizing of being, any sort of meaning, either objective or subjective. He was trying to take away objective meaning when he spoke of traditional metaphysics, and trying to take away any subjective meaning when he spoke of Heidegger's ontology. With that said, we do not know why he appealed here to the authority of common sense, which would recognize being as something meaningless. Common sense, after all, is basically disposed positively to the known world, and so it has a realistic and meaningful stance, and although the word being is a technical term belong to philosophy (metaphysics), in common sense it is matched in ordinary language by the word something or simply reality. Adorno's predilection for anti-realism and nonsense was the result of his a priori philosophical assumption, not the product of common sense.

The polemics with selected philosophers of recent times who, in fact, were quite far from traditional metaphysics and who were stigmatized wherever even a trace of that metaphysics could be found, opened the way for Adorno to his own metaphysics. But this metaphysics, properly speaking, was a total anti-metaphysics that denied being, God, objectivism, and subjectivism, and which put negation in center stage, the culmination of which was contradiction. In that respect, Adorno went even further than Hegel. Hegel had needed contradiction to explain the dynamics of being.[10] In the end, after traveling the whole road (logic, the philosophy of nature, the philosophy of spirit), being found rest, as it were, in the Absolute. Adorno did not agree with that solution. For him, being would always remain contradictory, because there was no Absolute.[11]

Adorno's theory had its origin in Hegel's philosophy because ultimately Adorno relied on Hegel's philosophical categories and his way of posing problems.[12] Since Adorno relied on Hegel, his theory is in fact a version of post-Hegelian ontology, just as Marxism is a materialistic version of his ontology

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10   On this occasion, contradiction is confused with the other kinds of opposition that Aristotle had already listed in the *Categories* (Chaps. 10–11); cf. Aristotle, *Metafizyka 1*, eds. Mieczyslaw Albert Krąpiec and Andrzej Maryniarczyk, trans. T.A. Żeleźnik (Lublin: Red. Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniw. Lubelskiego, 1996), 121–122.

11   Cf. Tadeusz Guz, "Szkic analizy filozoficznej Nowej Lewicy" [Sketch of a Philosophical Analysis of the New Left], in *Oblicza polityki. Rozprawy i szkice* [The faces of politics. Dissertations and sketches], ed. Andrzej Ulaczyk (Toruń: Wyższa Szkoła Kultury Społecznej i Medialnej, 2008), 118–119.

12   This crucial connection between Adorno's philosophy and Hegel is presented by Guz in *Der Zerfall der Metaphysik. Von Hegel zu Adorno* [The Disintegration of Metaphysics. From Hegel to Adorno] (Frankfurt am Main, New York: P. Lang, 2000).

and historically oriented philosophy. In order to explain the paradoxically different solution Adorno presented, we should consider the common starting point for both thinkers. That starting point is contradiction. That starting point is erroneous and false, and so it can even lead to contrary conclusions in keeping with the law of Scotus: *ex falso quodlibet*—from falsehood anything follows. The immobile and self-identical Absolute or contradiction without the Absolute and without identity may be just as well the end point. Only at the level of real being can various types of oppositions be precisely described and differentiated (relation, privation, opposition, contradiction) in order to learn that contradiction has a place only at the level of thought (as thought pronounces two mutually opposing judgments), but has no place at the level of reality. Since thought is the starting point for Hegel and for Adorno, this can lead to contradiction.

The procedure would not have fatal consequences if thought were only thought, but thought is identified with reality. Consequently, contradiction acquires the status of the most profound essence of being. That essence always leads to the Absolute (Hegel), or it always remains contradiction (Adorno). The entire problem is that Adorno accepted Hegel's philosophy as the authoritative standard for Western philosophy, but Hegel's philosophy is nothing of the sort. Hence, the defense of contradiction so strongly forced on Adorno has its own very definite limits, the limits set by Hegel's philosophy. Only within the framework of that philosophy could Adorno allow himself the apotheosis of contradiction.

When Adorno worked with the concept of traditional metaphysics, he thought that it was part of its essence to be systematic with a deductive character. In his opinion, that sort of metaphysics was not possible.[13] The fact that Adorno introduced the concept of system in the definition of metaphysics (traditional metaphysics) does not show that such a metaphysics is impossible; rather, it shows that Adorno did not understand the meaning of the word 'metaphysics,' or the context in which the word arose, and he did not understand the word system, or when, in what sense, and in what context it was introduced in philosophy. That shows even more strongly his ignorance of classical metaphysics. When he propagated his own philosophy as an anti-system, he put it in opposition not to classical metaphysics, but only in opposition to modern ontology.

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13   "Metaphysics is, according to its own concept, not possible as a deductive context of judgments over the existent."Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 407. Heidegger is an exception. In 1933, he joined the NSDAP (Nazi Party), and was a member as long as the party existed; cf. Jaroszyński, *Człowiek i nauka*, 283–305.

A new line of thought appears in Adorno's views that was not present in the philosophy of his predecessors.[14] That is the question of post-Auschwitz metaphysics. Adorno thinks that the atrocities that took place there completely eliminate any possibility to apprehend being positively. He writes:

> the feeling, which after Auschwitz revolts against all assertions of the the positivity of existence as sanctimonious twaddle, an injustice to the victims, against squeezing from their fate any meaning, however distilled it may be, finds it objective moment after the events, which condemns to mockery the construction of the sense of immanence that radiates from affirmatively established transcendence.[15]

Adorno thinks that Auschwitz proves that absolute negativity can be achieved, because that is the form that the murder of millions of innocents beings assumed.[16] This is something more than when the foundations of Leibniz's theodicy were shaken by an earthquake, because then a natural element was involved, while Auschwitz was a human work with incomparably more horrifying results.[17]

Adorno thinks that the tragedy of Auschwitz confirms the fall of metaphysics and the victory of materialism, saying, "the course of history imposes materialism on what traditionally was its direct opponent, namely metaphysics."[18] What sort of materialism does he have in mind? It is materialism that has no place for God, and in which reality is meaningless? Adorno says that this is because metaphysics was invented to show that God exists and that reality has meaning. Things happened differently: "the process that guided metaphysics inexorably toward the thing against which it once was invented reached its final point."[19] According to Adorno, metaphysics was invented to oppose meaninglessness, but it arrived at meaninglessness. "After Auschwitz there is no word, even a theological word that would invariably have the right to resound from on high."[20]

When Adorno refers to the tragedy of Auschwitz, he wants to refute metaphysics as well as theology and theodicy. The problem with this is that, for such

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14   Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 361.

15   Ibid.

16   Ibid., 361–362.

17   Ibid., 361.

18   Ibid., 365.

19   Ibid.

20   Ibid., 367.

a critique to have merit and competence, it must appeal to knowledge of those fields along with their various currents. Otherwise, we are dealing with the next quid pro quo, which puts the discussion at an entire different level. Until the tragedy of Auschwitz has been analyzed from an intellectual point of view and philosophical premises have been considered, the Auschwitz argument is not a real argument against metaphysics.[21] On the other hand, it is surprising that Adorno is not equally engaged in discussing the far greater crimes of Communism, for instance, the victims of Stalinist terror who died by the millions in prisons, camps, and in mines.[22]

Adorno's criticism of evil is selective, but his criticism of metaphysics is intentionally total. Neither Nazism nor Communism, which were responsible for the greatest crimes against humanity in history, are a complete mystery that could refute faith in the meaning of being and in the existence of God. Those ideologies, as the quintessence of intellectual speculations, are in their principles nihilistic and atheistic. Their crimes are a logical consequence of those principles, and they do not prove that God does not exist; rather, they start from the assumption that God does not exist. Adorno confused the order of causes and effects. Adorno did not make the sort of critique of metaphysics that was needed. He selectively condemned crimes, but he ignored the premises from which the crimes sprang.

In summary, Adorno's critique of metaphysics is somewhat restricted to only one line of metaphysics, mainly post-Kantian and post-Hegelian, but in such a way that his critique is a continuation of that line of metaphysics. However, since we are dealing here with a sort of apotheosis of negation with respect to the conception, meaning, and God, we should speak here of dialectic or ontology, but not in a general sense. Rather, we should speak of a negative ontology, one that puts negation in first place and makes it the most general context. Such an ontology is possible only as ontology where the starting point is a conception, which is then reworked dialectically, that is, purely intellectually. If, in that case, it is not one concept from which positive plurality is derived by the deductive method, since Adorno attacks such a conception of a

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21   I wrote at greater length about the sources of Nazism in my work *Człowiek i nauka*, 283–305.

22   In the 1930s, Heidegger gave intellectual support to the ideology of national socialism, while Adorno supported the ideology of communism. Adorno said, "We must formulate a radical Leninist manifesto"; Theodor W. Adorno: "Streng leninistisches Manifest" [A Strictly Leninist Manifesto] (orig. 1956), in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Works], eds. Grunzelin Schmid Noerr and Jan Baars (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1996), 66.

system. Instead, it is a constant concept, except that the concept is negated at the starting point.

Adorno explains his negative dialectic as follows:

> If in recent aesthetic discussions people have been speaking of anti-drama and the anti-hero, then negative dialectic, which after all must keep its distance from all aesthetic topics, could be called an anti-system. With logical consistency it intends, instead of the principle of the unity and omnipotent domination of the leading concept, to introduce the idea of what remains outside the fatal circle of such unity.[23]

One cannot go outside the fatal circle except by negation, and negation is always the negation of something, the negation of a unity and of something positive. The logical consistency that is supposed to expand the sphere of negation is also positive. Yet, in classical metaphysics, that starting point is not one concept of being, nor do we speak of deducing anything from a concept.[24] Adorno is not fighting against metaphysics but against ontology. In his fight against ontology, he is creating the next ontology, which regardless of how positive or negative it is, is an operation of concepts that are understood univocally.

From such a perspective, there is no room for truth, because being and thought must disintegrate. Being does not absorb thought, nor does thought absorb being, and we cannot speak of reconciling them with each other. It is complete disintegration.[25]

According to Adorno, philosophical systems are the fruit of social conditions and of the divergence of nature:

> The ontological claim to be situated beyond the divergence of nature and history is a lie. Historicity abstracted from what historically exists, sneaks over the pain of the antithesis of nature and history, an antithesis that for its part should not be ontologized. The new ontology is also in this respect crypto-idealistic, again it restricts non-identity to identity. When it makes the concept of historicity into the carrying agent of history and replaces history, it eliminates what relies on the concept.[26]

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23   Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xix–xx.
24   Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 53–100.
25   Guz, "Szkic analizy filozoficznej Nowej Lewicy," 122.
26   Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 358–359.

This entanglement of philosophy in history and in nature is permanent and endless. It is a position that Marx taught, and Adorno is Marx's loyal disciple.

Adorno would like to avoid any suspicion that he is staying at any level of identity. Any thesis, even the thesis of absolute mutability and negativity, is a held thesis that must mean what it means. It is, therefore, at the level of meta-language, in which the principle of absolute negativity is not binding. All his arguments are soaked in colors of metaphor typical of authors influenced by Marxism, and so philosophical systems are the products of the 'bourgeois reason.'[27] Many formulations also appear in which Adorno takes a belligerent stance to ridicule or outwit his opponent. Let us recall again that there is no room for purely theoretical knowledge in Marxism. Every form of human activity, including intellectual activity, is a kind of fight.[28] There one needs to appeal to negation and contradiction, which are colored by terminology drawn from propaganda.

Since negation always implies affirmation, because when I negate, I am negating something, and so whatever I am negating must first exist, negative dialectic is doomed to fight with what is positive. Winning the fight would mean the end of the negation. The negation would no longer have anything to negate, and so it would cease to be a negation. Therefore, negative dialectic must constantly seek enemies, as it were, and it must seek them within itself, just as the communists not only fought against the bourgeoisie but made purges in their own ranks.

Negative dialectic is an example of how theoretical thought evolves into a blind alley, since that thought as theoretical submitted to its own destruction. It submits to destruction because at the starting point, it rejects reality and takes contradiction as the leading principle of thought. That is not the starting point of metaphysics but of ontology. Negative dialectic is the terminal point of ontological thinking, but not of metaphysical thinking.

The error of the supporters of negative dialectic is that they do not make a distinction between ontology and metaphysics. With great determination, they criticize metaphysics, but in reality, it is a civil war within ontology. The assumptions upon which their reasoning is based are ontological assumptions, not metaphysical assumptions. Since not only theoretical knowledge comes into play here, but also ideological engagement, the critique of metaphysics takes the form of a caricature, seemingly scientific, but in reality brutal, and it is translated into a form of administrative battle with metaphysics.

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27   Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 21.
28   Cf. Jaroszyński, *Człowiek i nauka*, 249–254.

Not only for the communists of the Soviet Bloc, but also for the New Left, which sprang from the Frankfurt School, metaphysics is a thorn in their side, and it cannot be left alone under any circumstances. The system of metaphysics as the fruit of the purest form of theoretical thought (Aristotle) is a counterweight and threat to civilizations in which there absolutely cannot be any room for theoretical thought. Certain forms of philosophical reflection, such as negative dialect, are only fragments of the whole, which has non-theoretical ends. A clash of civilizations occurs here between the Hellenistic spirit and the anti-Hellenistic spirit. That clash has gone on for centuries, and its clearest manifestation is post-modernism.

Postmodernism: The End of Metaphysics, or the End of Ontology?

Although postmodernism is not really a philosophical movement, but is a collective name for many different views, within those views a series of anti-metaphysical statements appear. For this reason we should examine those statements to reconstruct the image of metaphysics that a particular author has in mind. Only then can we weigh and appraise whether the critique an author presents is accurate.

The main problem is that thinkers who are considered postmodernists approach philosophy, and approach any intellectual work, dialectically. In extreme cases that approach becomes a negation of the principle of non-contradiction. Then at some level they are no longer speaking about non-contradiction or argumentation, because the rejection of the principle of non-contradiction means that a thesis is at the same time accepted and rejected, both when it is a matter of one's own position and the position of one's adversary. In this case, discussion with postmodernism might take place at the meta-objective level.

As we remember, the principle of non-contradiction was rejected in the seventeenth century in Clauberg's ontology, and then in Meinong's theory of the object. Thus if the postmodernists of today reject that principle, they do so on ontological grounds.

The postmodernists try to get their thinking out of the cage of metaphysical assumptions and prejudices.[1] Metaphysical assumptions become a problem when metaphysics is treated as a system in the modern sense. That sort of system of metaphysics is already ontology, and the problem of assumptions appears in ontology, not in classical metaphysics. In classical metaphysics the object is really existing being, which is apprehended with the help of the analogical conception of being. Such being is really existing being. It is not an assumption, but is the first fact that needs to be explained. When postmodernism attacks the status of metaphysical assumptions, it is striking at the ontological concept of a system, not at metaphysics. The category of prejudices is an expression that does not directly belong to philosophical polemics, but at most

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1 Halina Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka* [Postmodernism and Metaphysics] (Warsaw: Wyd. Naukowe 'Scholar,' 2003), 21.

belongs to sociological polemics, certainly ideological polemics, and so it belongs to the language used by leftist propaganda.

Postmodernism is supposed to overcome the various types of opposition that postmodernists think are the product of traditional metaphysics. These include the opposition between subject and object, between essence and phenomenon, the primary and the secondary, the abstract and the concrete, and between constancy and change.[2] Unfortunately, those oppositions are not the product of traditional metaphysics, unless we shorten the history of metaphysics by two thousand years. The opposition of subject and object is an opposition that appeared in modern philosophy, first because of Descartes who separated human knowledge from the real world, and then because of Kant, who was the author of the modern conception of the object as dependent upon the knowing subject. In both cases, the real world is not the object of knowledge. That opposition did not occur in realistic classical metaphysics. On the contrary, the object of knowledge (the real world) as an act complemented the faculties of the knowing subject. Also, if we keep in mind that the terms subject and object have many meanings, then if we speak of the opposition of subject and object without precisely determining the way they are understood, we are either preaching to the converted or trying to open a door that was painted on the wall.

The opposition of essence and phenomenon is also a problem that belongs to the modern and contemporary philosophy of the subject, which is concerned with distinguishing between what is real and what is merely an appearance. Meanwhile in traditional metaphysics the concept of essence was connected with substance and with definition (Aristotle). It was connected with the problem of being in a state apart from a concrete being or concept (Avicenna), or as standing in a relation to existence, without which an essence is not an element of a real being. This opposition mentioned by the postmodernists also does not belong to the problematic analyzed in traditional metaphysics.

The opposition between the primary and the secondary may have its place in traditional metaphysics, but that opposition primarily concerns a relation based on a causal connection, whether in the sphere of being (between an efficient cause and an effect) or in the sphere of knowledge (we know accidents before we know an essence). This is not an opposition but a relation of dependence. Postmodernists probably have in mind the distinction that the British empiricists introduced between primary or secondary qualities or ideas, but that is a typically epistemological problem for philosophy that is understood in

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2   Ibid., 18.

minimalist terms, and so, for philosophy that does not even step directly into the sphere of ontology.

If it is a question of the opposition between the abstract and the concrete, that question has its place in the controversy over universals. That controversy began in the dispute between Plato and Aristotle, which concerned the status of form in relation to a concrete being and to our concept. That controversy was in the context of the most important domains of philosophy such as metaphysics, anthropology, epistemology, and even the philosophy of language. There are no shortcuts in resolving the problem, all the more since the treatment of the relation of the abstract and the concrete as an opposition is an attempt to treat the problem with a bias for one of several philosophical options.

The opposition between constancy and mutability goes back to the dispute between Parmenides and Heraclitus. There were proposals to resolve that opposition in various philosophical systems, including Aristotle's system. Aristotle tried to solve the problem with the theory of act and potency as principles that were not opposed but complementary. Unless it is shown which solution is under consideration, that is, which system and its framework, one cannot look for a way to overcome the opposition between constancy and mutability.

With regard to the problem of the conception of being, or the alternative between univocity and analogy, the postmodernist critique sticks to the conception of being understood univocally. This is especially clear in the example of Jacques Derrida, who is considered to be one of the leading postmodernists. Derrida strikes at the most sensitive points of metaphysics as ontology, which is univocity. Just as Hegel, before Derrida, tried to give dynamism to the static and univocal concept of absolute being by introducing opposition, which was supposed to be the motor of dialectical development, Derrida focused on the question of difference and *différance* to somehow split up the concept of being. The reference point for both thinkers was the concept of univocal being, which they both found unpalatable. Since they did not consider analogy, in particular the analogy within being, Hegel introduced dialectical opposition, and Derrida introduced ambiguity with mutually exclusive correlates, that is, the correlates are based on contradiction.

A consistently univocal concept of being led to a series of problems if one did not want to hold that there was only one single being, namely the Absolute. When being was understood univocally, the problem of the plurality of being and the plurality of the generation of being arose. If being is understood univocally, then criteria must be introduced to provide differentiation for the plurality of being. Someone may hold that plurality is an illusion, following

Parmenides, or that being arose as the result of the connection of non-being to the conception of being, following Plato, or that plurality is internally opposed, following Hegel. Someone may hold that being is internally contradictory, following Derrida. Those paradoxical solutions originate in a failure to consider the transcendental analogy within being. That failure occurs because the transcendental analogy within being is unknown, because scholastic philosophy among modern and contemporary authors has either been treated with contempt or has been reduced to a version of Scotism. The Scotist conceptulization of being, because of the fundamental univocity of the concept of being, must, on the one hand, open the question concerning the reason for reality, and, on the other hand, it must open the question concerning the reason for plurality, since the univocal concept of being is neither being nor plurality.

Derrida's arguments, which seem so surprising from the intellectual point of view, can be understood in the context of his polemics with the univocal conception of being. The univocal conception of being is not treated in a merely speculative manner (in a theoretical manner), but also treated sociologically and ideologically. This is because Derrida, as we should not forget, was a neo-Marxist. This meant that all forms of thought, even the most theoretical such as metaphysics, were forms of class struggle, the struggle for the domination of some people over others. Derrida thought that Western metaphysics wanted "to dominate and colonize, from the height of meta-language, other tribes and clans, entire languages."[3] That rather bizarre view, which sprang from a complete misunderstanding of Greek *theoría*, gave Marxism a yet more spectacular form, which would be attractive not so much for the proletariat as for the intelligentsia, in particular for the humanistic intelligentsia. In that way Derrida signed up for the plan to graft Marxism on to Western societies, a plan that began with the Frankfurt school. For this reason, it was not so much a question of eliminating metaphysics by changing the criteria for science (the questions that produce science, the scientific method), as was done in positivism and neopositivism, as it was a question of giving critical discourse the form of discourse that was as metaphysical as possible, by interfering in the language of metaphysics; the result would not be a departure from metaphysics, but a walk beside metaphysics. Derrida negated both the presence and the existence of

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3 Jaques Derrida and E. Meyer, "Labyrinth und Archi/Textur" [Labyrinth and Archi/Texture], in *Das Abenteuer der Ideen* [The Adventure of Ideas], eds. Josef Paul Kleihues, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, and Claus Baldus (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 103; cited in Perkwoska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 220.

being. Here he had in mind beings such as substances, essences, subjects, the now, the transcendent God, and self-identical humanity.[4]

What was the deconstruction that was supposed to be the method of philosophy?

> Deconstruction is the permanent internal 'loosening,' or 'differentiation' of the words/concepts that function in philosophical discourse, which consists in showing the mutability of their senses, means, and values depending on the position occupied in the structure of self-complicated streams of writing and series of constantly differentiated and repeated references to other streams of writing and to other constellations, that is to self-writing texts/worlds.[5]

Derrida's fields of reflection are fields of signs that do not function in the context of reality but in the context of other fields of sciences. It is thus a hermeneutical work, not a metaphysical work, if metaphysics is supposed to be the knowledge of beings and not merely of signs.

Deconstruction cuts us off from the real world and from reality, and it brings us into the field of signs. Then it strikes at the validity of rational thinking or reasoning. Human thought is supposed to be inconclusive, or incapable of essential performing reasoning processes, because conclusiveness is the ability to draw true conclusions from true premises. According to Derrida, the purpose of the analysis of a philosophical text is not a coherent interpretation or an attempt at verification, but it is decomposition, that is, to split apart the text from within. In this way, a philosophical text neither helps us to understand the truth, nor is it to be understood. We find ourselves at the antipodes from *theoria*, or to be more precise, at the center, the purpose of which is the complex destruction of *theoría*. This is not polemics, but an attempt to release a virus into language, so that language will paralyze thought. In this case it is a philosophical language, but similar mechanisms can be found in the language of other fields, especially such sensitive fields as the language of ethics, politics, art, or religion. Language has become so infected by the virus that words contain meanings that annul themselves. A new technology has appeared for the destruction of the humanities. This process occurs from within, in the semantic sphere, and metaphysics is the most important domain slated for destruction. The Marxist philosophers made a completely official declaration

4   Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 220–221.

5   Ibid., 222.

of the plan. They thought that by censorship and limits on publishing they would physically destroy metaphysics.[6] They failed in their plan, and so more refined methods were needed.

In the example of Derrida, we can see how that was supposed to be done, but at the same time we can see that metaphysics is a difficult field because it possesses its own antibodies or defensive mechanisms. Derrida may deconstruct metaphysical constructs, but the deconstruction always opens the question: which version or philosophical movement is he deconstructing? What knowledge does he possess in that area? Has he mastered the rudiments of the methodology of the sciences? This is all the more so, because it is impossible to raise metaphysical concepts without the foundation that is called *theoria*. Derrida is a militant intellectual, not a thinker who contemplates reality or a text.

When Derrida enters the territory of metaphysics he encounters the problem of pluralism and wants to reduce it to the state of isolationism: a plurality appears, the elements of which are independent of each other. Those elements do not possess enduring essences. What is most important is that it is not identity, but *différance*, which precedes difference that is the foundation of such an image of the world and thought. This conception is supposed to be the negation of the traditional image in which identity is fundamental, and where identity determines the difference in relation to something else. Here, however, *différance* takes the place of identity, and particular differences (*différences*) are derivatives of *différance*.[7] This procedure is closest to Platonism but in a negative way as the hypostasis of negative concepts (the theory of ideas was fundamentally based on the hypostasis of positive concepts, and only secondarily based on the hypostasis of negative concepts). It shows the limit that thought can reach, which a priori take into account nothing of reality (other than language), nor the rules of thinking (the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction). By changing only a single letter (from 'e'

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6   "one condition for the complete ideological victory of the Marxist-Leninist worldview in Poland is, among other things, victory over ideological influences, which are alien in terms of class, of philosophical directions. First of all it is a question of Thomistic philosophy"; Adam Schaff, *Narodziny i rozwój filozofii marksistowskiej* [Birth and Development of Marxist Philosophy] (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1950), 403; cf. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, "Lubelska szkoła filozoficzna" [Lublin School of Philosophy], in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozoficzna* [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy], 10 vols. (Lublin: Polish Society Thomas Aquinas, 2005), 6:533.

7   Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 222–223.

[*différence*] to 'a' [*différance*]), Derrida attempts to present not so much a new interpretation as the creation of a new reality.[8]

The way Derrida presents the problem of the specific character of Western metaphysics shows that he is allergic, as it were, to the identity, unity, and subsistence of reality as it was assumed by the Greek philosophers. That unity and identity is supposed to overcome plurality, which also is the source of evil.[9] It is clear the Derrida knows Greek metaphysics only from the Neoplatonic position, where unity is treated univocally and absolutely, hence the production of plurality must be evil. Yet plurality does not have to be evil, but this depends on what relation constitutes the derivation of plurality from unity. When it is emanationism, the negative aspect is primarily emphasized in derivative hypostases: each hypostasis is worse than the one that preceded it, and it does not bring anything of itself. When it is creation, then each being is directly from the Absolute and as such it is one of a kind. Because every created being exists by participation, and so by full dependence on God, each being is one and unrepeatable, as true, good, and beautiful.[10] So, despite the imperfection of the created being, there is something very positive in it. In the case of emanationism, each hypostasis is only a diminution of a higher hypostasis, all the way to the One.

Derrida wants to raise the status of plurality as understood in a Neoplatonic way and attacks unity. As a result a peculiar creative chaos is supposed to arise, and its principles are accident and non-logic. For Derrida, language is the field in which that chaos can become real. Language is a subsistent and creative sphere, and it is a self-expanding culture of signs.[11] At that moment, we hear

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8   Derrida applies to the problems of Western philosophy methods drawn from religious Jewish culture for which the main object was not reality, but the law expressed by a sign, a law that could be subjected to minute analysis (in the Talmud, the analysis of each letter), and the understanding of which was open to never ending interpretations, of which a temporary version was established by negotiation. M. Żardecka presents opinions of Derrida's critics that his critique of the fundamentalism of Western culture is based on the acceptance of another fundamentalism, "it is the text understood almost as in the Jewish Torah, holy and immovable"; M. Żardecka, "Postmodernism," in *Filozofia współczesna* [Contemporary Philosophy], ed. Leszek Gawor and Zbigniew Stachowski (Bydgoszcz: Oficyna Wydawnicza Branta, 2006), 374.

9   Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 226.

10   Properly speaking, an understanding of participation is crucial both for metaphysical pluralism and for creationism; cf. Zofia Józefa Zdybicka. *Partycypacja bytu. Próba wyjaśnienia relacji między światem a Bogiem* [The Participation of Being. An Attempt to Explain the Relation between the World and God], Lublin: TN KUL, 1972. OCLC: 7024649.

11   Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 226.

the voice of the primacy of the civilization that entered into the ambit of Greek culture by Zeno of Citium and in which signs are prior to reality. For this reason Derrida's attack on Western metaphysics, that is, on Greek metaphysics, is not a philosophical attack, but an attack in terms of civilization. The critique of metaphysics is only an element of class struggle or a struggle of civilizations.

Obviously, this invasion by another civilization into the territory of Western philosophy is facilitated by the state in which Western philosophy has found itself after Descartes. This is because, although initially the categories of the subject or self, and the idea or object seemed immovable, those categories had no basis in reality and had to be systematically 'loosened.' When, in addition, the principles of identity and non-contradiction as foundations of knowledge and thought were rejected (which was easy since those principles were no longer treated as cognitive expressions of being), then all the more philosophy had to enter a phase of criticism or a game at different levels of language. Language separated from reality lost its connection with constant meanings and became a sign for the sake of other signs, and even the word as an expression was to be broken into letters that could generate new meanings (as Derrida did when he moved from the word *différence* to the word *differance*, by changing a single letter ('é' to an 'a'). That path did not lead to the end of philosophy as a whole or to the end of Western metaphysics, but to the end of the version of philosophy that we call ontology.

Summary of Part 2

The crystallization of ontology as a separate domain of philosophy is a product of modern times. Although this process is very deeply immersed in the history of philosophy, and many ontologists are unaware of this, in modern times there was a turning point, and ontology was no longer a continuation of metaphysics. There were two reasons for this. First, ontology definitively put the concept of being over being itself, if not in so many words (especially in the first works in ontology), then in the way ontology understood being. For ontology, being is equivalent to the concept of being. This means that the concept of being is the chief object of ontology. Through that concept the framework for how reality is understood is determined, and as in Hegel's case, the concept simply generates reality.

The second point is that ontology eliminates God from its inquiries. God is first transferred to theology. That would be a logical response to ontology, the object of which is the concept of being, and not the concept of God (Wolff). Next, God and theology are eliminated from the scope of philosophy (Heidegger). For this reason, the difference between metaphysics and ontology becomes irreversibly more pronounced. Some thinkers are very pleased with this (Husserl, Heidegger), while others seek new fields for philosophy in logic and mathematics (Meinong, Bolzano, Frege), some seek para-metaphysical knowledge (Kierkegaard), and some try to raise the rank of their analyses at the level of language by calling them metaphysical (the metaphysics of conceptual schemata). Some think that ontology can be combined with metaphysics, or that both disciplines can be treated as one and the same (Stróżewski).[1]

In turn, the critique of metaphysics so typical of Heidegger, and so typical of postmodernism that looks to Heidegger, is based on a very fragmentary and simplified acquaintance with ancient medieval philosophy bordering on ignorance (postmodernism), since in fact it is a critique of rationality as it was understood in the Enlightenment, and it is a critique of philosophy that has become ontology. However, just as the Enlightenment does not provide an authoritative measure for the concept of rationality developed by Greek, Roman, Arabic, and Christian thought, so ontology is not a continuation of the philosophy that seeks to understand being. Ontology is one of the blind alleys of that philosophy that lost sight of the end and object of philosophy, which

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1 Władysław Stróżewski, *Ontologia* (Kraków: Aureus : Znak, 2004), 17.

is reality. Those differences between metaphysics and ontology will become clearer when we analyze some fundamental philosophical problems to show how they are seen by metaphysics, and how they are seen by ontology.[2]

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2   A.B. Stępień mentions seven different kinds of ontology: (1) the general science of being qua being, or general metaphysics; (2) the science of (purely) possible being, or the essential or formal theory of the object (in abstraction from its real existence); (3) the general theory of anything as a (possible) object of thought; (4) eidetics (in the phenomenological sense); (5) the analysis of the fundamental conceptual apparatus that appears in various sections of organized knowledge (Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, W.V.O. Quine); (6) the second of the three logic systems (calculi) of Stanisław Leśniewski; (7) other logical theories interpreted objectively (Scholz, Nelson Goodman, and others); cf. Antoni B. Stępień, "Ontologia: typy i status poznawczy. Ontologia a metafizyka" [Ontology: Types and Cognitive Status. Ontology and Metaphysics], in vol. 1 of *Studia i szkice filozoficzne* [Philosophical Studies and Essays], 2 vols, ed. Arkadiusz Gut (Lublin: Red. Wydawnictw KUL, 1999–2001), 303.

PART 3

Metaphysics or Ontology: Disputed Questions

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A series of problems has been discussed for centuries within the framework of metaphysical knowledge. Those problems, which include the search for answers to the questions of what being is, what existence is, and what essence is, can be considered from a purely metaphysical perspective, and they can be polarized, as it were, by showing the differences between a more metaphysical approach and a more ontological approach. When we try to answer these questions, we see clearly how metaphysics differs from ontology. For this reason also, the final part of this work is intended to reveal the essential differences between metaphysics and ontology in the most fundamental questions.

Being or the Concept of Being?

The object of metaphysics is most often called being. At that point, the word 'being' becomes a technical term. It has its own technical meaning, not merely its intuitive meaning. The colloquial but rather inadequate counterpart is the word 'world.' The word 'reality' is much better because it is unknown whether world means the Earth alone or the entire cosmos, while reality is everything that is real, whether on Earth, or in the cosmos, or in itself as God.

The fundamental intuition connected with the object of metaphysics, understood as being-reality-world, is that the other sciences either investigate the genera or species of being; for example, in biology, different types of plants are studied, in zoology, different types of animals, while other sciences investigate only certain aspects of reality, such as mathematics investigates quantity. Aristotle, the founder of metaphysics, very clearly expounded on the differences that divide first philosophy from the other sciences. Only first philosophy studies being qua being (*on he on*), while the other sciences investigate parts of being, and so they are called particular (*en merei legomena*).[1]

That intuition was not shared by all philosophers, even ancient philosophers. For example, for Parmenides, the most important matter was not the problem of the scope of the object of philosophy, or an appeal to a common-sense conception of reality as the world around us, but the determination of what being really is. In that respect, Parmenides had no precursors and had no direct successors.[2]

Plato also went the way of Parmenides. Plato brought the problem of true being, the being that really is a being (*to ontos on*) in the forefront. When Plato spoke of 'being,' it was in opposition to phenomena, not in direct opposition to non-being;[3] or, he spoke of being in opposition to that which changes.[4] Sometimes he contrasted being with plurality.[5] Plato positively connected

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1 Aristot., *Met.*, 4.1, 1003a 22.

2 Xenophanes, who came before Parmenides, spoke of God, but not of being. cf. Pierre Aubenque, "Syntaxe et sémantique de l'être dans le poème de Parmènide" [Syntax and Symantics in Parmenides's Poetry], in *Études sur Parménide: Problèmes d'interprétation* [Studies on Parmenides: Problems of Interpretation] (Paris: Vrin, 1987), 106–107.

3 Plat., *Hp. Ma.* 294b.

4 Plat., *Phileb.* 54, Plat. Rep. 518c.

5 Plat., *Parm.* 127e.

being with unity[6] or with what was known only intellectually.[7] In the case of Parmenides and Plato, the word 'being' was not used in the common-sense meaning as the counterpart of what is real; rather, it was filtered right away, as it were, through previously accepted criteria for what it is to be real. What did not meet those criteria was an illusion, a phenomenon, or non-being.

Aristotle had a completely different approach. Aristotle accepted the most common-sense understanding of reality, and to such a degree that in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, he did not even use the technical term 'being' (*to on*), but said that he was concerned with knowing the principles and causes of everything (*to panta*).[8] The expression 'everything' seems to be as neutral as can be without resolving what criteria reality must meet for the philosopher to recognize something as real. The history of philosophy, metaphysics, and ontology has been played out between those approaches. The first approach is represented by Parmenides and Plato, who describe the criteria for being real, and the second approach is represented by Aristotle, the philosopher who discovers or finds reality already there, calls it being, and tries to understand it (by seeking its principles and causes) and to analyze it (by investigating its structure). Here perhaps are the first courses of the differences between ontology and metaphysics.

The Term 'Being' and Its Meaning

The Greek term '*to on*'(translated as being) comes from the verb '*einai*' (to be). Its grammatical form is a present participle, which the Greeks often used as a noun. Parmenides introduced the term 'being' in philosophical language as (*t' eon*).

The Latin counterpart for the term '*to on*' is the word '*ens*,' which forms like other participles such as *sapiens* (one who thinks) or *patiens* (one who suffers). In classical Latin, unlike Greek, the participle very rarely appears in the function of a noun, and so it is not surprising that the word '*ens*' was absent in classical Latin. Boethius was the author who first brought the word '*ens*' into philosophical language. It appeared only in translations of the Greek texts of Porphyry, but we do not find the word in the philosophical writings of Boethius such as *Consolation of Philosophy*.[9] The word '*ens*' became widespread later.

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6   Plat., *Soph*. 243c.

7   Plat., *Phileb*. 59d.

8   Aristot., *Met*., 1.2, 982a 21.

9   Étienne Gilson, *L'être et l'essence* (Paris: Vrin, 1994), 335–337.

The Greek form (*to on*) is very concrete and dynamic with its reference to the verb—not static or abstract. From the grammatical point of view, the best translation of the Greek (and Latin) word is being constructed like other verbal nouns (cleaning, poking, yelling, etc.). If it were more strongly connected with the participle, then the term '*to on*' should be rendered as 'being' (that which is) from the gerund being. In any case, when we use the word 'being' and try to understand and analyze it, we end up relying on intuition, which is not completely reliable. Also, the word 'being' has been somewhat reworked by philosophy.

In German, the Greek term '*to on*' is rendered with the infinitive form of the verb '*Sein*' (to be), '*Das Sein*' (the being), or a participle form as '*Das Seiende*' (beings). This procedure is natural for the German language, and the terms do not sound artificial.

In English, being is a verbal noun. In French, as in German, we have either a noun from the infinitive verb, '*l'être*' (being), or a noun from the participle '*l'étant*' (being).

These linguistic digressions are important to grasp certain nuances of meaning that each term carries, and especially the translation, which may contain not so much a change in meaning as a shift in emphasis. That plays a great role in metaphysics, especially when the discussion concerns the foundations of the understanding of reality. If we ask what being is, then with the word 'being,' a certain linguistic intuition appears. Therefore, additional explanations are needed to properly understand the question of being, especially when it is a question of reconstructing the views of the Greek philosophers that otherwise would be misunderstood.

In Search of Real Being: Parmenides and Plato

So, it is in the case of Parmenides, the first philosopher to use the word 'being.' His introduction of the expression '*t'eon*' had a specific context. The expression did not encompass everything that in ordinary language we call reality, the world, or the universe. Parmenides wanted that which is called 'being' to meet specific conditions discovered in intellectual knowledge. One such condition was the principle of identity: being is, and non-being is not. Being is that which is, and not that which is not. This is because what is not, is not a being, that is, it is non-being. The principle is evident and clear. For his part, Parmenides gave a univocal dimension to the principle. Consequently, only that which is simple and unchanging is a being. Parmenides was not concerned with looking at reality as broadly as possible, but was concerned with showing what truly could be called a 'being,' which is determined by the principle of identity. Since the principle of identity was understood univocally, anything that was composite,

and especially if it changed, could not be called a being. It could be called a 'phenomenon' or a 'non-being.'[10]

In this way, in Parmenides, we encounter the problem of the difference between the word 'being,' what the word refers to, and how the word is understood. The question arises of the relation (and eventually, the difference) between the concept (or understanding) of being and everything that we regard as reality in common-sense (spontaneous) knowledge. In other words, how is being (or reality) related to the concept (or understanding) of being? That depends on what we want to emphasize in our conception. Parmenides did not care about a conception that would encompass reality as a whole, but wanted a conception that would refer only to what was regarded as reality because it met the condition of the principle of identity. Parmenides was working with a specific conception of being that did not coincide with what we colloquially call reality.

Plato moves a similar path in his speculations on the conception of being, except the pole of being encompasses not only the one absolute being, but the entire world of ideas. If that which is constant and identical with itself is a being, and that which changes, appears, and disappears is not a being, then this condition is not met by one being alone, but by the multitude of ideas that we apprehend in our intellectual knowledge.[11] While meeting the condition of constancy and identity, Plato was able to overcome the absolute monism of Parmenides when he introduced multitude (pluralism). It was only a multitude of ideas, since the world around us still did not possess the status of a being because it was changing. Constancy in the thought of Parmenides and Plato was the most important aspect of being because it allowed something to be called a being. Ideas are beings because they meet the condition of constancy, which is a necessary feature of being.

Plato also spoke of being with regard to the cosmos. The cosmos was not only constant, but also changed, and in it generation and corruption took place. Plato explained the presence of what was constant and what was changing by saying that in the cosmos a mixture of being and non-being, of ideas and matter, took place. Thereby something arose that was between being and non-being.[12] Change is not absolute non-being, but is a mixture of being and non-being.[13] That theory again presents us with a problem. Does such a mixture occur in reality, or is it a process that occurs only at the level of concepts?

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10   Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 273–275.

11   Plat., *Phileb*. 54; Plat. Rep. 518d, 521d; Plat. Theat. 152d, 157d; Plat. Tim. 27d, 29c; Plat. Protag. 240b.

12   Plat., *Tim*. 35.

13   Plat., *Soph*. 256d.

Although Plato's understanding of being was not as restrictive as Parmenides's conceptualization, the concept of being was still marked by immutability. Only if something met the condition of immutability could it be called a being. Here Plato used a tautological description: '*to ontos on*' or 'being being,' or again, in a looser translation, 'real reality' or 'true being.' The contents of our knowledge primarily match such a conception of being. Plato called their correlates the ideas. The ideas do not belong to the world around us. The ideas are present in the world only by participation.

Being in the World: Aristotle

Aristotle departed from the restrictive and a priori approach to being because he had in mind the world around us. That realism was connected with overstepping the limitations of scope that were imposed by the a priori conception of being. Aristotle called 'being' all categories of being that describe the various aspects of the being of this material and sensibly knowable world. He also regarded what was mutable and composite as being. Therefore, in his *Metaphysics*, he devoted an entire book to the question of change, which he analyzed in terms of the relation of potency to act, where change is the actualization of potency, and where not only act, but potency also is apprehended as being.[14] The Aristotelian concept of being sprang from common-sense.

This does not mean that everything is the same being, because being is understood analogically, according to the *pros hen* analogy, which was called the analogy of attribution in the scholastic tradition. Beings are diverse and hierarchically ordered, and each thing is a being to a lesser or greater degree. The reference to substance and accidents also matches common-sense knowledge, in which we distinguish something as a subject from a quality or a quantity, which are properties.

A certain restriction appears, not so much with respect to being, as with respect to the object of scientific knowledge. It is because of the conception of scientific knowledge, in which the object of science is necessary, constant, and general. Being is investigated in that aspect, but this does not mean at all that it is reduced to that aspect. Something that cannot be an object of science could be a being, nonetheless. Even an accident is a being, but it cannot be known scientifically. Science can study something that has a definite cause, is unchanging and necessary, and provides a foundation for general concepts.

The Aristotelian conception of being is open both in scope and content to reality as it is known in common-sense knowledge. A philosophical interpretation is sought for that conception of reality, but restrictions appear

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14   Aristot., *Met.*, 1–8.

not with regard to the conception of being, but with regard to the conception of scientific knowledge. However, the conception of scientific knowledge does not eliminate the boundaries of being.[15]

Being and the Apprehension of Being

When we ponder how the first philosophers determined what being is and why it is, we face a problem that is fundamental for metaphysics: How is being related to the conception of being in human knowledge?

Being as a Correlate of Intellectual Intuition: Parmenides and Plato
For Parmenides and Plato, being was the correlate of intellectual intuition.[16] Here we are dealing with immanent adequacy between knowledge and the object of knowledge. According to Parmenides, the human intellect apprehends what is simple and unchanging, and only that. Here, there is only being, because where there is change there is no longer any being.[17] For Plato, the field of intellectual intuition was expanded with the multitude of ideas in proportion to the multitude of concepts. Because intellectual intuition apprehends what is simple, composite ideas are mechanically connected. The idea of humanity is composed of various ideas, because human beings are complex beings.

While Parmenides remained in his thought within the ambit of one tautological thought (being is being), the reference to the plurality of ideas shows that they are not commensurate in scope or in content. The idea of being even or odd is different from the idea of a horse. The idea of a horse can be predicated only of horses, but the ideas of odd and even can be predicated of very different ideas, because there may be an even number of horses, geese, people, etc. Finally, we arrive at the idea of being and the idea of non-being. We predicate the first idea of beings, and the second idea of non-beings, and we predicate both ideas of that which changes. The idea of being appears in

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15   With Aristotle, the first phase of speculation on being concludes. Neither the Epicureans nor the Stoics use the term being at all, and among the Neoplatonists the one is dominant rather than being; cf. Aubenque, "Syntaxe et sémantique de l'être dans le poème de Parmènide," 103–104.

16   Here, Krąpiec speaks of the construct of intuitive thought; cf. Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 50–68.

17   When Parmenides described opinion ($\delta\delta\xi\alpha$ [*doksa*]), he did not appeal at all to the word '*einai*,' but in the part of the poem devoted to being, the word '*einai*' (and its variants) appears eighty-six times; cf. Aubenque, "Syntaxe et sémantique de l'être dans le poème de Parmènide," 104–105.

Plato's thought. The idea of being is not our apprehension of being, but it is something in itself, and it is 'found' in the pleroma. Does the intellect in each case read ideas in the pleroma, or are ideas in our intellect? Plato thought that ideas were beings in themselves, and that they were beyond your intellect. The idea of being is such an idea.

As in the case of Parmenides, the object of thought was identical to being, because only being can be thought, so in the case of Plato there were incomparably more of those objects of thought as ideas, so many more that Plato spoke ironically of the matter and saw a series of difficulties. Ideas can be produced ad infinitum.[18]

Abstraction or Analogy?—Aristotle

In Aristotle's philosophy, the matter became much more complicated. In its most fundamental act, our intellect is disposed to apprehend the forms of things. This is done by the process of abstraction. By abstraction definite contents are revealed to the intellect. The process of abstraction begins from sensory knowledge, but it takes place chiefly in the imagination. The light of the agent intellect falls on the imagination. That light shows an immaterial generality that can be apprehended by the passive intellect.[19] Our faculties of knowledge are active at the level of extracting contents from a known thing, but not in the creation of those contents. The intellect, in its fundamental acts, does not create the known contents. The cognitive form is diaphanous in relation to the aspect under which the thing is known. The cognitive form is what the Latin writers later called the *medium quo*, that is, the means or intermediary through which we know something. It is not the object of knowledge, which they called the *medium quod*. The *medium quod* can occur, but secondarily, as 'second intentions.' For Plato, the problem did not yet appear as a theoretical problem for him to consider. From the point of view of Aristotle's philosophy, the Platonic idea is the *medium quod*, that is, the objectified content of the diaphanous medium.

In the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, the word '*noetá*' appears as the counterpart of '*aisthetá*.' The *aisthetá* are what we apprehend by the senses,

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18   It is a question of the 'third man,' because if we recognize an idea on the basis of a perceived similarity between many objects, then such a similarity has also occurred between the plurality of the objects and the idea itself, and so consequently another idea must be introduced, then another one, and so unto infinity; Plat., *Parm.*, 132a–133a). Aristotle took up this line of thought in his criticism of the theory of ideas; Aristot., *Met.*, 7.13, 1038b1–1039a24).

19   Aristot., *On the Soul*, 3.5.

while the *noetá* are what we apprehend by the intellect. The word object and the word concept do not appear here. Just as the senses have their own proper and common objects, so the intellect has its own proper object, and it is the form of a thing.

In this context, what status does the knowledge of something as a being have? The matter was simple for Plato. It was an adequate correlate of intellectual intuition. If we speak of human beings, then we must find the idea of humanity, and if we speak of being, we must find the idea of being. Although the idea of being in a certain way has a privileged position, it is still one of the ideas.

The problem is more complicated for Aristotle. Being is not the form of a thing. The form of a thing is a being, but matter, the entire substance, and the other categories are also being. Being then must be cognitively apprehended in a different way than the forms that are the counterparts of genera and species. But how?

The human way of knowing reality implies the participation of cognitive media without which there would be no human knowledge. Two problems arise here. The first problem, which is the object of knowledge: the thing, or the medium? Second, what is contained, and what can be contained in the mind? The first problem appears in the controversy between Plato and Aristotle. For Plato, the intermediaries are at the same time the objects of knowledge, while for Aristotle, they are diaphanous in relation to the thing known. The second problem brings the question of the constituent elements of being. Can everything that constitutes being be found in the medium and at the same time become a concept? Plato and Aristotle agree that the elements that constitute being can be conceptualized.

The third problem is this: Does the word being reveal another aspect of reality besides the aspects that are revealed by categorical concepts? Is there a certain layer of reality that is common to everything that is called being? Is there another type of concept different from the categorical concepts? What new thing is introduced by saying that the horse, the case, the tree, and the human being are beings? If we start from the concept of being, we face the temptation of treating the content of that concept like the structure of categorical concepts (which include genera and species). Then we univocally relate them to everything that we call being and thus, the content of the concept of being is identified as a general layer present in each being, that is, as an essence in a species, but without any categorical limits. Just as one may speak of equinity or horseness, so one may speak of beingness.

As soon as the word 'being' becomes a technical term belonging to a particular philosophy, it becomes entangled in the context of that philosophical system. The meaning or concept of the word will not refer first to reality and

then to the concept or apprehension of reality, but the reverse; the concept is put on center stage, then the concept or something in the light of the concept will be regarded as reality. For this reason, it is very important in metaphysics to investigate how and why a particular philosopher understands being in a particular way, why he works with a particular concept of being, or if it not a concept in a strict sense, then it forms an understanding of being as it is located in the mode of human knowledge. The key question that emerges here is that for different reasons, the word 'being' in philosophical systems does not at all need to mean 'reality' as we understand the word in common-sense knowledge. Therefore, it is important to investigate what a philosopher understands by the word being. At that point, the difference between being (reality) and the concept of being (the mode of human knowledge of reality) becomes clear. At the same time, the question arises whether that difference is considered in every philosophical current.

If the concept of being means the mode of human knowledge of being, we must first identify what forms the concept and why, and then, in what measure the concept is adequate to that of which it is supposed to be the concept.

Like Parmenides and Plato after him, who, when speaking of being searched for what could be called being in the highest degree, Scotus in turn, searched for what could be predicated as being in the broadest scope. Here, in turn, he appealed to the principle of non-contradiction, because that principle allowed him to open the conception of being from possibility to necessity. Both what is necessary and what is possible are being, and each is a being, because each is non-contradictory.

A question remains: Is it a being (reality) or a concept of being? If it is a concept of being, then how is it related to being-reality? When the concept is not merely the mode of knowledge but is also the object of knowledge, then the question of being becomes meaningless, because everything has already been enclosed in a concept. In that case then, reality truly ceases to be cognitively accessible.

From Conception to Concept—The Intervention of Theology

For metaphysics, it is crucial to answer the question whether we are concerned with being or with the concept of being. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the meaning of the word concept. The word comes from the Latin word '*concipere*'and, in turn, from *con-* (with) and *capere* (to capture, to take). In terms of knowledge, a 'concept' is the act or result of taking something in, and in this case something is taken into the mind. The Latin word '*conceptus*' leads to the English words concept and conception. The starting point here is the operation of conception or conceptualization, the effect of which is a

concept that will take the form of a noun. For this reason, we cannot say that we conceive a concept, but primarily we conceive a thing. The conception of concepts is secondary to the conception of things, since the act of conceiving things must precede a concept. A concept is not a third thing between the thing and the act of conception, just as there is no third thing involved when the hand catches a ball. There are only two elements that form the unity in the act of conception because they are interconnected as act with potency. The intellect is the potency to be actualized by the conceived thing.[20]

In Greek, there is no single word that would preserve this interesting ambiguity, which turns out to be full of effects. For the word 'conception,' we have the word '*kinesis*,' and for 'concept' we have '*noema*.' *Noema* simply means that which is known (from *noein*), while *kinesis* means movement. In Latin, the word *conceptus* has had a career not so much in philosophy as in theological speculations that were secondarily applied to philosophy.

According to Thomas, the concept of the intellect (*conceptio intellectus*) is the similarity of a known thing to the abstract idea held in the intellect.[21] The concept of the intellect is in the intellect as in its subject, and it is in the thing as its representation.[22] However, the word also appears with reference to the

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20   John O'Callaghan, "Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas," *Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. 1 (1999): 79–81.

21   "*quia conceptio intelectus est similitudo rei intellectae*" (because the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the thing understood); Aquinas, *ST* I. Q27. A2 resp.; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici Summa theologiae. 2, Pars 2.a 2.ae*, vol. 1, ed. Pietro Caramello (Torino: Marietti, 1963).

22   "*Primo considerandum est, quod ratio cuiuslibet est quam significat nomen eius, sicut ratio lapidis est quam significat nomen eius. Nomina autem sunt signa intellectualium conceptionum: unde ratio uniuscuiusque rei significata per nomen, est conceptio intellectus, quam significat nomen. Haec autem conceptio intellectus est quidem in intellectu sicut in subiecto, in re autem intellecta sicut in repraesentato: nam conceptiones intellectuum sunt similitudines quaedam rerum intellectarum. Si autem conceptio intellectus non assimiliaretur rei, falsa esset conceptio de re illa, sicut si intelligeret esse lapidem quod non est lapis. Ratio igitur lapidis est quidem in intellectu sicut in subiecto, in lapide autem sicut in eo quod causat veritatem in conceptione intellectus intelligentis lapidem talem esse*" (First it is to consider that a reason for anything is what is meant by its name, as the reason for the stone is what is meant by its name. Names are the signs of the intellectual conceptions: therefore, the reason for anything meant by a name is a conception of the intellect, as meant by a name. This conception of the intellect is somehow in the intellect as in its subject, in a known thing as in what is represented: the conceptions of the intellect are a kind of likenesses of the things that are intellectually known. If the conception of the intellect does not assimilate to the thing, the conception of this thing would be false, just like knowing something to a stone, which is not actually a stone. The reason for the stone is somehow in the intellect as

Holy Trinity and the relations between the Divine persons. Here '*conceptio*' should be translated as 'conception,' that is, a certain process that we should understand by starting from what takes place in the world of nature. Thomas explains that preparation of matter, formation, and heating are necessary for reproduction. The preparation and heating of matter is the task of the mother, and formation is the task of the father.[23] The conception of Christ is connected in a special way with the Holy Spirit more than with his mother.[24]

There is another problem in connection with the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Here there are various clashing interpretations. According to Bonaventure, the plurality of persons is explained by emanation (which would be a reference to Neoplatonism), while according to Thomas, we should speak here of relations: God is related to Himself in various ways.[25] Thomas's thoughts on the mystery of the Trinity do not affect questions concerning the mode and structure of human knowledge, but this is not so in the case of Scotus, who held an emanation-based model for explaining the mystery of the Trinity and said that one person arises due to an act of the intellect, and the other person due to an act of the will.[26]

When Scotus presented his theory of human knowledge, he worked with two meanings of the word '*conceptus*,' sometimes as a concept and sometimes as the process or action of conception. This, in turn, opened the way for a new way to understand human knowledge completely different from Aquinas's

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in the subject, in the stone itself as in what causes the truth in the conception of the intellect knowing that it is a stone.) Thomas Aquinas. *Responsio ad fr. Ioannen Vercellensem de articulis CVIII....* [Reply to Brother John of Vercelli Regarding 108 Articles ....], Q. 1. nr 816; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Opuscula theologica. 1, De re dogmatica et morali* [Theological Works. 1, Of Dogmatic Theology and Morals], ed. R.A. Verardo (Taurini: Marietti, 1954), 223. "Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est conceptio intellectus de re significata per nomen" (The reason for what is signified by a name is the conception of the intellect about the thing signified by a name). Aquinas, *ST* I. Q13. A4, resp.

23 Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis* [Commentary on the Sentences of Master Peter Lombard, Bishop of Paris], eds. Pierre Mandonnet and Maria Fabianus Moos (Paris: Sumptibus P. Lethielleux, 1929–1949), bk 3, d. 3, q. 2, art. 1, ad 5; Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales* [Miscellaneous Questions], 9th ed., ed. Raimondo Spiazzi (Torino: Marietti, 1956), quod. 8, q. 3, ad 3.

24 Aquinas. *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, bk 3, d. 3, q. 2, art. 1, ad 5; Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, quod. 8, q. 3, ad 3.

25 Cf. Olivier Boulnois, *Être et représentation. Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot (XIIIe–XIVe siècle)*[Being and Representation. A Genealogy of Modern Metaphysics at the Time of Duns Scotus (13th–14th century)] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 109.

26 Ibid., 113.

interpretation. Human knowledge is not passive reception of the similarities of things, but it becomes more and more the production of the object of knowledge.

In Thomas, we have on the one hand, the intelligible form (*species intelligibilis*), which is revealed, just as Aristotle explained, by the action of the agent intellect upon the mental image. On the other hand, Thomas inherited the idea of the internal word (*verbum interius*) from Augustine. The internal word arises, that is, it is conceived, due to the act of the possible intellect, and it is what we think. The external word, or the sound we speak, corresponds to what we think.[27] Thomas initially identified the *verbum interius* with the *species intelligibilis*, but later he made a distinction between the two. The internal word is the concept whereby we refer to a known thing through the mediation of an intelligible form. The form initiates knowledge, and the concept crowns knowledge. The concept is what the intellect produces in itself as the similarity of the known thing. The concept is not a really existing thing, but is only a counterpart of the essence of the thing at the intentional level.[28] In terms of being, the *species* is an accident of the intellect.[29]

It is interesting that later thinkers began to be most interested in the *verbum interius*, and in a certain way, it came to center stage. Giles of Rome thought that the *verbum interius* was more perfect that the form of the sensible thing. Henry of Ghent generally rejected the *species* and left only the *verbum*. Richard of Middleton thought that the *verbum* was the first object of our knowledge and was not a transparent medium. In this way, the knowledge of reality was obscured by the medium.[30]

Of course, the authors were not yet thinking of any form of apriorism in which the object of knowledge would be merely a human construct, but they were saying in a spirit of realism that the *verbum* revealed the thing. This immediately raised another question: How do we know that the word reflects the

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27   Ibid., 117.

28   Ibid., 118.

29   "*species intelligibilis in intellectu praeter essentiam eius existens esse accidentale habet: ratione cuius scientia nostra inter accidentia computatur*" (an intelligible species in the intellect that is other than the intellect's essence has an accidental being, which is why our knowledge is numbered among the accidents); cf. Thomas Aquinas. *S. Thomae Aquinatis… liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium seu "Summa contra gentiles." Vol. 11, Textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus* [St. Thomas Aquinas … or the Catholic Faith against the Errors of the Unbelievers of the Truth of the Book of the '*Summa contra gentiles.*' Vol. 2. Leone Text Carefully Revised], ed. Marc Petrus, Pietro Caramello, and Ceslao Pera (Rome: Marietti, 1961), I:46, nr 392; O'Callaghan, "Concepts, Beings, and Things," 76.

30   Ibid., 119.

thing if our internal state of consciousness is the object of knowledge? The *verbum* is an internal state of our consciousness.

According to Scotus, a 'word' (*verbum*) is an act of intellectual knowledge, and without a *verbum*, there is no knowledge. The *species intelligibilis* also needs to be retained. Notably, the *species intelligibilis* belongs to the memory, not to the intellect. A *verbum* is not a concept, but is simply a thought.

Regardless whether a *verbum interius* is an object of knowledge or a transparent medium, its content corresponds to the essence of a sensible thing. How then can we speak of the concept of being? Being encompasses many various genera and species that differ essentially from each other. We cannot speak of a concept of being in the same sense as we speak of the concept of a sensible thing. If the *species intelligibilis* and the *verbum interius* come into play here, there is no concept of being. What then do we have in mind when we speak of a concept of being?

On the other hand, in the question the following question is still open: Is the concept of being an object of our philosophical knowledge, or is it a transparent medium, that allows us to see reality? What sort of medium would it be if being contains in itself many different species and genera?

In Aristotelian logic and epistemology, problems appear in determining or defining the object of metaphysics as being or as the concept of being. If being is the object of metaphysics, then we also must somehow understand being, and in that sense, we must have some sort of conception or concept of being. What is that concept?

There is no escaping the concept of being (a concept in the broad meaning of the word, as an understanding), if we speak of knowledge, which indeed is a certain kind of interiorization, a living act of a knowing subject. What happens in us cognitively when we refer to being and when we say the word being? What is its counterpart at the level of the *species intelligibilis* and the *verbum interius*? Is there such a counterpart? In expressing the concept of being, are we also speaking of a concept only in an analogical sense?

Therefore, the question whether the object of metaphysics is being or the concept of being is crucial. For Aristotle, being was understood either in many ways or it was broken down into particular categories, and it could be broken down as types of *species* or analogously, according to the analogy of attribution. At that point, the concept of being is a complex cognitive structure, not a simple *species*, or a form, which is an intentional similarity of a known thing. In the case of Aristotle, that structure was composed of the elements that were part of the analogy of attribution, namely, a 'substance-essence,' and the other categories of being that stand in various relations to substance. Even substance-essence as the major analogate was not understood as a *species*,

because a material substance was composite, and it was composed of many sub-ontological and non-independent elements. The Scotist school tried to understand being as *species*. That understanding, which at the same time was a concept, was the object of metaphysical knowledge.

For the concept of being—rather than being itself—to be the object of metaphysics, it must include several elements. Aristotle is not speaking of concepts so much as of generalities (*on katholou*), and eventually, he appeals to the word '*logos*' that, as we know, is one of the most important words in Greek philosophy, although it also is one of the most ambiguous. With relative safety, it can be rendered as 'thought,' but it would be going too far if the word concept is used in technical translation.[31]

In Aristotle's case, the question of the concept of being would be the question of being as a generality. The generalities of which Aristotle speaks are species, genera, and categories.[32] The generalities end in the categories. Therefore, we cannot speak of being as a generality or as a concept. The rise of a generality in the soul is closely connected with induction, and the categories are the limits of induction. Being cannot be a generality because it would disintegrate into the categories. The analogical understanding does not cause being to become a generality. By induction (*epagogé*), we can arrive at best at categorical determinations, but a generality cannot be taken any further, because equivocity or ambiguity already lies beyond. We arrive at each category by a different path. The categories as modes of being correspond to equivocity on the part of being itself. No accident is a substance; hence, we cannot say of substance or of any accident, that they are beings in the same way, and so we cannot produce here any generality common to them. Being ultimately is the reason why we cannot produce a concept of being understood as a generality. If there is no being as a generality, by the same token, there is no concept of being, and consequently the concept of being cannot be the object of metaphysics.

By contrast, in the Scotist school, the concept of being does appear, and that concept is the object of metaphysics. What is the reason for this? To what changes has the philosophy of Aristotle been subjected? How does it differ from Aquinas's conception?

In Aristotle's case, there is no mention of the concept of being. We can speak of an understanding of being, because here we are dealing either with

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31   Aristot., *An. Post.* 2, 19, 100a–b; cf. W.D. Ross, *Aristotelous Analytika = Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics: A Revised Text* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 675. Unfortunately, Ross introduced 'general concepts' in the translation, looking to a Latin word that, as we see, has a new philosophical and theological context that was alien to Aristotle.

32   Ibid.

equivocity (at the level of the categories), or with the analogy of attribution. We understand both, but they do not make a concept.

The Concept of Being as the Object of Metaphysics—Duns Scotus

In the case of Scotus, the concept of being appears. This is not accidental but completely deliberate. In this regard, there are several aspects of the concept of being that should be noted. First, it should be emphasized that concept of being does not appear in the work of Scotus in the same way in which Aristotle speaks of the rise of generalities, since we reach the species or genus, which can be definite and predicated of individuals, from a sensibly known concrete thing through memory and imagination. Before Scotus, Avicenna remarked that the concept of being was not produced on the model of a generic concept.[33] As a specific or generic concept, the concept of being is empty. Such a position allows us to avoid pantheism, where the common nature of being would designate a nature common to God and creatures. How then can the concept of being arise?

Avicenna thought that the concept of being was somehow infused into our intellect and so it appeared a priori and not a posteriori. The concept of being is also the first and fundamental concept both from the metaphysical and psychological point of view.[34] Scotus emphasized the difference between the concept of genus and the concept of being, and remarked that it is the first object produced by our intellect. That process that is supposed to lead to the production of the concept of being is called *abstractio ultima* (ultimate abstraction). Edward Iwo Zielinski in a discussion of Ludgar Honnefelder's position explains the meaning of the concept of being in Scotus as follows:

> The formal object of the concept of being is a concrete being such as occurs in reality, which is always connected with a *modus intrinsecus* proper to itself; it is also not a mere product of the intellect's reflective action; it is rather the *ratio formalis* common to every being insofar as it is a being, regardless of and 'earlier' than it, before it is finite or infinite; this *ratio* appears, however, as such in a 'diminished' (*deminutum*) representative of the abstract concept. 'Being' is also not some sort of general common nature that at least as a formal separate *realitas* would inhere in a concrete being.[35]

33   Cf. E. Iwo Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna*, 21–22.

34   A.M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*) [The Distinction between Essence and Existence from Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)] (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1937), 3–4.

35   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 67.

This rather complicated explanation contains certain typical points that should be considered. For a concept to be one concept, it must look to something common. In the case of being, that is *formal reason* (*ratio formalis*). What is that reason? It is not a concrete being, nor is it an exclusive product of the intellect. A concrete being is only a concrete being, and a pure product of the intellect, because it is only a product of the intellect, cannot refer to being. To what, then, does the formal reason in being refer? If it is supposed to refer to all beings, then it must belong to being before any qualification such as finitude or infinity is attached to being. However, that cannot be a common nature positively understood, because then we would have pantheism.

Scotus tries to produce a concept of being in such a way that it encompasses with it being as a whole, and so both the creature (finite being) and God (infinite being), at the same time avoiding attempts to introduce a single nature of essence common to all beings. Individual beings are concrete. The generality of nature is not suited to the set of concrete beings, and so there remains a concept that in some way encompasses being as a whole. What does that concept really contain? We read further: "[being] designates the whole of the beingness of each being, containing inclusively (*unitive*) all moments of being, but expressed in a 'diminished' way in an imperfect concept."[36]

The concept of being contains all the moments of being, and they can be located because they are diminished. What are those moments? The first moment is beingness whereby "something is a being and is located in everything that is a being in the full meaning of the word. That moment does not determine being in all its properties, but only in what belongs to each being."[37] If that moment is beingness or *realitas*, then despite everything, we do not know very well what it is if we want to go beyond the purely terminological layer. Instead, we learn, "this moment does not determine being in all its properties, but only in what belongs to every being."[38] Obviously, this moment must be common to all beings, but the explanation of what beingness is that Honnefelder presents, does not appear to be too satisfying. Honnefelder thinks:

> beingness is not in any case a part of being, but the whole, and the whole is is apprehended in a minimal dimension of being.... That indefinite *realitas* without any *modus intrinsecus* designates the entire being, but

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36   Ibid.
37   Ibid.
38   Ibid.

apprehended as as *res imperfecta* that does not consider its later concrete determinations.[39]

When Honnefelder speaks of the whole, he is thinking that beingness would refer to being as a whole. However, beingness would be apprehended in a minimal dimension without an internal mode that determines being, when being is apprehended as something imperfect.

As we analyze those passages, we get the impression, perhaps because of the excessive number of Latin expressions, that they are purely verbal solutions and that despite everything we are far from reality. We still do not know what this beingness or reality is. The other problem that immediately appears is that, if there are several such moments of being, and not one, then it is difficult to speak of one concept. Are not those other moments also being? If not, what are they? Also, if existence, for example, were such a moment, then how could existence be included at all in the concept? No answer is developed to those questions, but we learn further:

> being is ... for Scotus the formal object of a real concept, not merely a purely real determinant. It is 'real' insofar as its foundation is what determines that something is a being. However, since that foundation as such does not really exist (only concrete beings really exist), being is merely a formal object apprehended in *abstractio ultima* and expressed in a concrete concept.[40]

If the foundation of the concept of being does not really exist, this means that there is an abyss that cannot be crossed between the concept of being and reality. On the one side, and so on the side of reality, there is concrete being. On the other side, on the side of human knowledge, there is the concept, the foundation of which does not really exist. So, in what way can the concept of being refer to being?

Scotus remarked that the only thing that can be stated about the concept of being, and which must find its counterpart on the side of being, is that the one and the other are non-contradictory, while on the side of content, it can be said that it is undetermined to such a degree that only further determinations can indicate whether it is a question of God or of created being.

Scotus is interested in being at the level of the concept, and this is the concept of being that is analyzed as the object of metaphysics. Only the concept

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39   Ibid.
40   Ibid.

of being possesses the sort of generality that can refer to being as a whole. A concrete thing, species, genus, or category does not possess such generality. The concept of being is found only in a knowing intellect, but it is the object of metaphysics. Metaphysics is human knowledge that must take into account the mode of human knowledge. But why is it of being as a concept?

The answer is not so much metaphysical in character as theological. Scotus wants to define the object of metaphysics in such a way as to situate both God and the creature within it. This is possible only when the object is not being, but a concept of being. Consequently, Scotus seeks what is most common to God and creatures. Here, beingness or non-contradiction comes to center stage. At that point, we come to a threshold that is crucial from the metaphysical point of view. If beingness, or literally translated, reality (*realitas*) is constituted by non-contradiction, then, are we really at the level of reality, or are we only at the level of possibility? Everything suggests that we are at the level of possibility, because non-contradiction is only a gauge of possibility. How then can we pass from possibility to reality, or is this no longer necessary since possibility is reality? If the answer to the last question is yes, then a chasm opens between the metaphysics of Aristotle and Thomas, and the metaphysics of Scotus.

To sum up, if the object of knowledge is a concept as a concept, regardless whether it be a specific, general, or categorical concept, or the concept of being, then we are dealing with possibility and not reality. If non-contradiction determines reality, then it is possibility and not reality.

This means that if the object of metaphysics is not being but the concept of being, then metaphysics will be the science concerning the possible, even if necessary being, namely God, will be such a possibility. The introduction of metaphysics into the field of possibility is the price that Scotus must pay for confusing theology with metaphysics, and so, for introducing God into metaphysics with the help of concepts. Over time, such an approach would have the result that metaphysics would become ontology, philosophy that on the one hand, would have possible being as its object regardless of really existing concrete things (*haecceitas*), and on the other hand, it would be philosophy that excludes God from the scope of its object. Although Scotus would not have agreed with either result, and for that reason, his metaphysics cannot be called ontology, still, his position concerning the object of metaphysics would lead to such consequences.

The concept of being only to a certain degree arises by abstraction. The starting point of abstraction is knowledge of a concrete thing. However, that is not a process that runs in stages from what is concrete (*haecceitas*) to what

is most general (namely the concept of being) because the concept of being is the result of both abstraction and intuition. The concept of being is what is known as first, and it is what is first knowable. As absolutely simple it is present in all knowledge of a concrete being or of other concepts. The status of the metaphysical concept of being is as follows: insofar as beings outside of our knowledge (external beings) concretely exist, they are general as known, while the metaphysical level overtakes the level of being and knowledge. In connection with this, the metaphysical concept of being is neither general nor concrete. This peculiar situation of the concept of being in the metaphysical sense was called by Scotus *natura communis*, common nature. For Scotus, metaphysics is knowledge of the concept of being as prior to more concretely existing beings and beings apprehended in essence-oriented knowledge.

In that solution, Scotus looks to Avicenna's 'third nature' (*natura tertia*), but which concerns only specific essence. Scotus transferred it to the concept of being. Avicenna had considered the problem of the status of general concepts that express the essences of things in separation from their existence in the concrete thing, and in separation from their predication (hence, generality) of concrete things. Avicenna was interested in the state of such an essence in itself without any reference to the concrete thing or things. Scotus took up that idea from Avicenna but applied it to the concept of being.

A question arises: Why was that necessary? Each thinker had different reasons. Avicenna was closer to Aristotle and opened Aristotle's views to different interpretations, especially regarding the question of the controversy over universals. It was, as it were, a third road between nominalism and moderate realism. Scotus's reasons were completely different and they flowed not only from philosophical sources but primarily from theological sources. Scotus was searching for a metaphysics that could help people to know God and to know God by the light of the natural reason.

Since we cannot directly know God, then we must find a circuitous route, which would at the same time be a rational route. Here also, a concept of being that would refer to all beings including God was necessary. There could be no concept of God because we do not know God directly, and it could not be a concept produced on the basis of the sensibly knowable world, because God is transcendent. A special pre-concept that would encompass God and creature was necessary. The pre-concept was the concept of being understood in an entirely different way as *natura communis* where the question of whether it is concrete or general is treated as secondary. Metaphysics cannot be the science concerning being or God, but it must the science concerning the concept of being if it is to be the science concerning both being and God.

A Concept of Being Closed to Reality?

A basic question arises here: By knowing the concept of being, do we know being? To answer this question, we must consider the various aspects that the concept of being, not as being, but as a concept brings with it.

Here, once more, we must look to the views of Francisco Suárez and his distinction between the formal concept (*conceptus formalis*) and the objective concept (*conceptus objectivus*).[41] The first is the act of apprehending a thing, or the common concept of the thing. The second is the thing known as the reason that is known or directly represented by the formal concept.[42] That reason is the essence. If we have one formal concept, then one objective concept must correspond to it.[43] In that case, on the basis of those concepts we must reach the concept of being as essence, since only essence meets the conditions that it is apprehended as one with the help of the formal and objective concept.[44] Thus, if the concept of being is the object of metaphysics, then that concept will ultimately lead us not to being qua being, but to essence as capable of coming into existence, that is, as possible. Being qua being, in this conception, is that which is possible, and what is really real loses its key significance in metaphysics. Clearly, the concept of essence occurs in several suppositions. When Aristotle spoke of essence, he did not go beyond the limits of the categories and therefore essence had to be connected with genus and species, and consequently, there could not be a single essence for all the categories. Nonetheless, that was the case only because Aristotle looked to the real concrete thing that was a specimen of a species. As soon as our act of knowledge, which Suárez described as the *conceptus formalis* becomes the starting point, then the path leads in reverse: we must now adapt the object, including

41   Gilson remarks that the *conceptus obiectivus* had already been discerned in the Middle Ages, but by a few masters who were not well known; cf. Gilson, *Linguistics and Philosophy. An Essay on the Philosophical Constants of Language* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1988), 76. Because of Suárez, who was presented in lectures at the La Flèche College, this underlay the Cartesian concept of ideas (cf. Rául Echauri, *El pensamiento de Étienne Gilson* [The Thought of Étienne Gilson] (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1980), 152–153.

42   CF. Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* 2, 2 vols., reprint, ed. Charles Berton (Hildesheim: Olms, 1965), II:1:1; Pierre Aubenque, "Suárez et l'avènement du concept d'être" [Suárez and the Advent of the Concept of Being]. In *Francisco Suárez (1548–1617)*, eds. Adelino Cardoso, António Manuel Martins, and Leonel Ribeiro dos Santos (Lisboa: Colibri: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa, 1998), 14; Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Suárez," In Suárez, *Concepciones de la metafísica*, 110–112.

43   Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, III 2:3.

44   Aubenque, "Suárez et l'avènement du concept d'être," 15–17.

being, to our knowledge. As a result, we do not reach the real concrete thing but we stop at the concept of being, which in an objective sense (as a *conceptus obiectivus*) corresponds to a new understanding of essence, no longer as a species or genus, but as a non-contradictory content that is capable of existence.

If the concept of being is the actual object of metaphysics, then it must be a concept that truly within its scope encompasses being as a whole, but it does not exhaust being with respect to content or existentially. In content, it is the poorest of concepts, because it contains only non-contradiction, and existentially it leaves aside existence since to be a being only the mere possibility of coming into existence is sufficient.

In Suárez, the difference between the types of metaphysics represented by Scotus and Thomas is intensified. Thomas searched for a process of knowledge that would lead to an apprehension of being that not only in content, but also with respect to content and existence would apprehend being in all its richness. That was real being, and not possible being. However, if the concept of being were the object of metaphysics, which was the position that Scotus and later Suárez chose, then the concept of being definitely must impoverish the cognitive apprehension of reality, and it also must be closed to the knowledge of the element that is most important in the order of being, because that element determines reality, and meanwhile that element, namely existence, cannot be apprehended in a concept.[45]

As we can see, the controversial choice between metaphysics and ontology begins when we ask whether being or the object of being is the object of our inquiries. If it is being, then we have decided for metaphysics, and if it is the concept of being, sooner or later, we find ourselves in ontology.

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45   Gilson remarks that if the concept of being were to precede the metaphysical experience of being, then metaphysics could not have being as its object, but would always have as its object some concept of being, and thereby it would no longer be metaphysics (cf. É. Gilson, *Constantes philosophiques de l'être*, Paris 1983, 152).

Real Being or Possible Being?

Today, being, the concept of being, the concept of possible being, or possible being are most often regarded as the objects of ontology. People do not pay any greater attention to the difference between the objective order (possible being, being) and the meta-objective order (the concept of possible being, the concept of being), or between what is real (being), and what is merely possible (possible being). Consequently, the difference between thought and reality is blurred, and ontology as the main section of philosophy ultimately becomes the analysis of thought (ideas), and not the analysis of being. It stands aloof from the source-based understanding of metaphysics as a kind of knowledge that has reality as its object.[1]

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1 The scale of confusion in this matter is best illustrated by descriptions of the object of ontology found in dictionaries or Internet encyclopedias. In Wikipedia (admittedly not necessarily reliable, but still very influential), ontology is defined as the "study of the nature of being, existence, or reality as such, as well as of the basic categories of being in their relations" (*Ontology* [online], mod. May 9, 2001 (accessed May 10, 2011): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontology). In this conception, ontology does not seem to differ from metaphysics. The further refinement of the object contains a certain noteworthy nuance: "ontology deals with questions concerning what entities exist or can be said to exist"; ibid.). The last part of this description no longer concerns the level of language (which can be said to exist), and it opens the field for ontology as it is traditionally understood, as the science concerns that which can be spoken of, as a result of which the difference between real being and intentional being is blurred. In turn, in the Internet edition of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ontology is discussed together with logic (Thomas Hofweber. "Logic and Ontology." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta), which explicitly indicates the dominant feature of logic, and not of metaphysics. In that entry, the description of the object or of ontological questions, metaphysics returns: "ontology is the study of what there is," whether God exists, and the problem of the existence of universals. We may detect a certain nuance here, that ontology does not start from the fact that something exists, but whether anything exists at all becomes a problem ("These are all problems in ontology in the sense that they deal with whether or not a certain thing, or more broadly entity, exists"). When the question is presented in this way, it may refer to the existence of God, whose existence we cannot affirm directly, while in the problem of the existence of the universals it is a secondary problem in relation to the direct knowledge of the existence of being. To summarize, we may have the impression that the description of ontology presented here is the result of the absence of any distinction between metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology.

The question arises: how did it come to this, that being could be exchanged for a concept, and reality exchanged for possibility? We may leave to the side positions in which those difference are unrecognized or trivialized, or positions in which the object is opened so widely (the study of what is) that the objects of logic and mathematics can be situated in it, but in such a way that ontology was able to take on metaphysical power. One way or another, the difference between ontology and metaphysics that was historically drawn is today increasingly blurred, but to the benefit of ontology. Therefore, it seems very important to bring out this difference at the level of the difference between what is real and what is possible. The point is that at the level of ontology the description of what is real must watered down in a peculiar way. Even if it speaks of what is, it does so without expounding on any reference to the real, a reference crucial for metaphysics. If ontology studies what is, that what is possible also comes into play, because what is possible also is.

The problem of the difference between what is real and what is possible must be illuminated in the context of the history of philosophy. Two fundamental philosophical principles play a key role here. Those principles, depending on their interpretation can lead to the loss of the reality of the object of metaphysics. There, we find the beginning of ontology, which *expressis verbis* did not appear until the seventeenth century.

On the Principle of Identity and Non-contradiction

The first principle was the principle of identity. Parmenides discovered the principle of identity when he said, "being is, and there is no non-being" (*esti gar einai, medén d'ouk estin*).[2] Reflection on that principle led Parmenides to the conclusion that only what was absolutely simple, necessary, and unchanging was being, while what was composite, changing, and non-necessary was not being, because we could not say that it is, since at one time it is such, another time it is otherwise, and at one time it is, and at another time it is not. This is because being is as it is, and there is no non-being, where non-being is also that which at one time is, and at another time is not.

What sort of being meets the Parmenidean criteria for beingness? Only the Absolute meets those criteria. Only the absolute being is a true being, while the universe or the world cannot be called being. The application of the principle of identity to the description of what constitues a being reduced the concept of being solely to the Absolute Being. However, in this way, upon the canvas

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2   Parmenides, fragment 6. In Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 270.

of semantic and linguistic presuppositions, the ordinary belief in the reality of the world around us and in the reality of the universe was subverted. The world and universe seemed to be non-being or an illusion of being. From that perspective, if we could speak of Parmenides's metaphysics, it would be pure theology, because only God meets the criteria for beingness presented by that philosophy. Only what is necessary is being. What is possible or what is real but not necessary is not being. Such a consistent could not be further from ontology. It is rather a theo-metaphysics.

The second fundamental principle of philosophy was the principle of non-contradiction, and we should seek the beginnings of that principle also in the thought of Parmenides.[3] It might seem that it was only the negative version of the principle of identity because it states that being is not non-being, and non-being is not being, and so with the use of negation it says the same thing as the principle of identity. Because of that principle, the understanding of being shifted not only from necessary being to real being, but also and primarily to possible being.

In what case did this happen? It happened when two conditions were met. First, when the principle of non-contradiction became the first principle of philosophy. Second, when philosophy was understood as a mathematical system. If the principle of non-contradiction is preceded by the principle of identity, then we remain at Parmenides's position of absolute monism. If the first principle is the principle of non-contradiction, then the concept of being is extended not only to real being, but also to possible being, because possible being is non-contradictory.

In the case of Parmenides, we are dealing with a quasi-systematic philosophy, and so, for him, the starting point was not the affirmation of the really existing world, but it was thought, which would be the foundation for further philosophizing. That thought is first the principle of identity, and then the principle of non-contradiction. Since the first principle is the principle of identity understood in absolute terms, the principle of non-contradiction cannot extend the concept of being to real and possible being, but it is only a negative formulation of the principle of identity.

The question appears differently in Aristotle. Aristotle began from an affirmation of being, so that on the basis of the conception of being he could explain but also defend both principles, mainly against the objections of the

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3 "Never shall this be proved—that things that are not are (οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ, φησίν, εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα), but do thou, in thy inquiry, hold back thy thought from this way," Plat., *Soph.* 237a; cf. Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, trans. F.M. Cornford (New York: Pantheon, 1961).

Sophists. For Parmenides, those principles establish a way of understanding being, or properly speaking they determine or define what is supposed to be a being, and what cannot be regarded as a being.

The principles of identity and non-contradiction underlay logic because all the operations of logic were based on those principles. Their significance was all the greater as metaphysics itself receded into the background after Aristotle. The principles returned to metaphysics by way of logic as fundamental principles of thought and as fundamental principles for performing operations on signs. Since in logic the field of operations was extended to the possible, it is not surprising that the principle of non-contradiction began to play a role equal to the principle of identity, although in an efficient sense.

Thus, when the principle of identity restricted the understanding of being to the Absolute, so, in turn, the principle of non-contradiction opened the understanding of being to the non-contradictory, and so the understanding of being included not only God and the real world, but also the possible. In both cases, though for different reasons, reality such as we apprehend it in common-sense knowledge, without a priori philosophical assumptions, recedes to the background, and the gauge of being as real ceases to play an important role in philosophy as ontology. Necessary being (because it perfectly corresponds to the principle of identity) and possible being (because it is located within the area of the principle of non-contradiction) are most important. Ontology, which has possible being as its object, can explain real being only as possible being. In such a case, which science would be concerned with real being as real?

The way in which metaphysics was transformed into ontology, and real being was transformed into possible being, was rather circuitous. The crucial turns in the road concern a peculiar interpretation of the views of Aristotle, and then, in medieval times, the path entered the realm of theology. The way was opened to ontology first in the context of theological speculations. Not only was being reduced to a conception and to possibility, but also in a wider perspective, God paradoxically was excluded from the scope of ontology.

Possibility, Potency, and Real Essence: Aristotle

How did Aristotle see the problem of possibility? To answer this question, we must look first to his theory of being. Act (*enérgeia*) and potency (*dúnamis*) are part of the structure of real being. When Aristotle explained how many ways potency could be understood, he showed that the most imposing context was connected with motion. Potency is the principle of change in something

other or as other. Potency can be active as the source of change, or passive as the passive reception of the influence of an active potency.[4] In that context, Aristotle showed the difference between what was potential and what was possible (*dunatón*). Possibility refers to the opposite of which is not necessarily possible, and the impossible is the opposite of which is necessarily true. It is not necessarily false that someone is sitting, and so it is possible.[5] On the other hand, potency is not merely logical possibility, that is, it is not limited only by the principle of non-contradiction. Aristotle states, "it cannot be truly stated that something is possible but will not happen."[6] This means that potency is something more than possibility and something more than non-contradiction. Potency is an element of the structure of real being apprehended in the dynamic aspect. If real being undergoes change, then potency concerns the phase in which something does not yet exist but will be after a time. When we look retrospectively at a ship, we see that the wood from which it was made was prior to the completion of the ship, and it was in potency to be a ship. Sand or water was not in potency to be a ship.

When Aristotle analyzed reality that could be known by the senses, he searched for an explanation for the fact that reality could change. On the one hand, we are dealing with what already is because it has been realized (act, or performance, completion). On the other hand, we are dealing with something that does not exist but will exist (potency). While possibility is completely neutral to what is or what will be, potency in the light of Aristotle's analyses is something that is already found in the real order, both if it is a question of secondary matter, which is already formed; for example, wood, and prime matter, which is pure potentiality and enters into the substantial structure of being as it remains under the actualizing role of form (*eidos*).[7]

Potency is an essential aspect of real being, not only of being such as it is devised in thought. Potency is an essential aspect both in the dynamic sense as that in which a change occurs, and in a structural sense as that which is part of a composition of being, no longer at the sub-ontological level, because only on this account can a composite being constitute a substantial unity.

Possibility refers to that the opposite of which is not necessarily false. If something is not necessarily false, then it is certainly possible, but this does not mean that it is true or that it will be true, that it is an act or a potency.

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4   Aristot., *Met*. 1045b 25–1046a 35; 1019a 15–1020a 5.

5   Ibid., 1019b 29–30.

6   Ibid., 1047b 45.

7   Ibid., 1027a 29–102b 18.

In this way the difference between logical possibility and real possibility becomes evident.[8]

The importance of this difference can be very clearly seen when Aristotle discusses the question of definition. The object of definition is an essence-substance (*ousía*). If it seems completely natural to us today that anything can be defined whether it is something real or not, Aristotle's position in the question was different. Only what is real can be defined. Why was this so?

In Aristotle's conception, definition (*horismós*) was primarily rooted in his metaphysics, not in his logic. A definition should reveal reality, and its purpose was not to refine a concept. In the real order, substance here plays a crucial role as the main category of being, and for this reason, it is the most important object of knowledge. Our knowledge of a substance is crowned by its being defined.[9] A definition, that is, a discovery of limits, is a complex process because the substances we know are composite and not simple. If they were simple, they would be intuitively known. In a strict sense, a definition refers to a substance, which is a real being.

That which is merely in our thought is not even an essence or substance because it is not real. This is one reason why what is only in our mind cannot be defined in a strict sense. Aristotle firmly states that there is no definition of anything that is not an essence or substance (*me ousion*) and is not a being (*me onton*).[10]

What today we call a definition with reference to merely mental objects would be for Aristotle only meanings. He thought that at most, we could give the meaning of non-beings a name (*semainein gar esti kai ta me onta*). Since that meaning does not indicate a substance or essence, it is also not a definition. For example, let us use the expression 'copper mountain' (*oreichalkou*); we understand what it means and we can present a definition, but in the perspective of Aristotle's philosophy, although it is true that we understand what copper mountain means, we cannot present a definition of it. Why is this so? It is because a copper mountain is a thought we contrived, but no copper mountain really exists. If a definition defines a substance or essence, that is, something

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8   "The necessity of a negative proposition, therefore, establishes the boundaries of impossibility, whereas *possibility lies within the boundaries of noncontradiction.* Hence, in the case of a logical possibility or logical impossibility, we are not dealing with a concrete being, but merely with a conceptual or intentional being. Such possibility or impossibility applies basically to the cognitive, not to the real order, Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 225.

9   The Latin word '*definitio*' is the exact counterpart of the Greek word '*ὁρισμός*': both mean limitation. The point is to present what something is in a definition by dividing it from what it is not.

10   Aristot., *An. Post.* 92b–93a.

real, and there is no copper mountain, then there is no definition of a copper mountain.[11] Although the expression copper mountain, unlike the expression 'square circle,' is not internally contradictory, no essence or anything real corresponds to it. Only words, and not essences of things, correspond to it.[12]

Aristotle so strongly connected definition with substance and essence, and so strongly connected substance and essence with reality, that definitions could not be transferred to the level of pure semantics or possibilities. A definition must designate a real essence and a real substance.

Toward Possible Essence

Aristotle's view that essence and definition can refer only to what is real, but cannot refer to what is possible, was modified in the Middle Ages in a way that would have serious repercussions. Essence would be separated from real being, and it would be separated as essence, not simply as meaning. Also, that essence would be regarded as the main object of metaphysics. Consequently, possible being would become the object of metaphysics, and possible being would be regarded as being, as the word is properly understood.

Avicenna and Scotus should be mentioned among the authors who played the most important role in this transvaluation in metaphysics, whereby the foundation was laid for ontology.

While Avicenna expounded on possibility because the difference between reality, potency, and possibility had been blurred, Scotus turned to possibility because he regarded non-contradiction as the fundamental gauge of being, and as we have seen, non-contradiction includes the possible.

Why did Avicenna, who knew Aristotle's works perfectly, blur the difference between potency and possibility, a difference so important to Aristotle? This was connected with his peculiar interpretation of Aristotle's theory. In Avicenna's theory, the difference between what is real and what is contrived in thought is not put center-stage; instead, the difference between the necessary

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11   Ibid.

12   Evidently, in the context of the Greek word 'οὐσία,' which indicates being (from εἶναι—is), this matter seems obvious, but when we are dealing with awkward expressions or translations, the problem is put more and more at the level of meta-language, which takes the word far away from reality. The English word essence does not call us by intuition of meaning to reality in the same way as to Greek word 'οὐσία' (substance) or the Greek expression 'τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι' (what-was-and-is-being). For this reason, it modern European languages it is easy to speak of the essence of anything that is not contradictory, and which is connected with the meaning of a name, without regard to any reference to reality.

and the possible is foremost. According to Avicenna, the fundamental metaphysical difference is the difference between the necessary and the possible. That position is far from Aristotle's metaphysics. Aristotle first considered the difference between the real and what is thought-of (in the second case it was mainly a question of the Platonic ideas), and in the framework of the real Aristotle emphasized the mode of being: if something existed in itself, it was called a substance, and if something existed in something else, it was called an accident (*symbebekota*).[13]

Meanwhile, for Avicenna, the difference between the possible and the necessary became the most important. What was this so? It was connected with a new conception in which an element unknown to Aristotle appeared, namely existence. Avicenna reformulated the conception of being and the conception of essence because of existence, which paradoxically at this stage took philosophers further from reality in order to come closer to reality. According to Avicenna, everything that does not exist from itself is possible, and that which exists from itself is necessary.[14] If something does not exist from itself, then with respect to being it is secondary, whether it exists in itself (substance) or exists in something else (accident), because in both cases, it does not exist from itself and it is only possibility. Only the necessary is real, and all else is only possibility.

Such reasoning is right only when the starting point is not being, but a concept of being. If the definition of the object of metaphysics is supposed to begin from the affirmation of the existence of something real as real, not merely possible, then such a statement does not refer primarily to necessary being, but to contingent being, which although it is not necessary, still is. Even if the

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13   Aristot., *Met.* 1003a 34–1005a 17.

14   "*Dicemus igitur quod ea quae cadunt sub esse possunt in intellectu dividi in duo. Quorum unum est, quod cum consideratum fuerit per se, eius esse non est necessarium; et palam et etiam quod eius esse non est impossibile, alioquin non cadet sub esse, et hoc est in termino possibilitatis*" (We say that what belongs to existence can be divided in the intellect in two ways: one as taken in itself, and its existence is not necessary; and it is clear that its existence is not impossible, though it does not belong to existence, and it is what belongs to possiblity); Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina. I–IV* [Book on the First or Divine Science 1–4]. Critical edition of the traditional Medieval Latin. eds. S. van Riet and Gérard. Verbeke (Louvain: Peeters; Leiden: Brill, 1977), I, cap. 6, 8–12, s. 43. Avicenna took the division of being into necessary and non-necessary being from Al-Farabi; cf. Idoia Maiza Ozcoidi. *La concepción de la filosofía en Averroes: Análisis crítico del Tahāfut al-tahāfut* [The Conception of Philosophy in Averroes: Critical Analysis of Tahafut al-Tahafut] (Madrid: Editorial Trotta: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2001), 131.

real does not exist from itself and is not necessary, when it exists, it exists. If something exists, it is not merely a possibility. Meanwhile, Avicenna looked at being through the prism of a particular conception of being in which the reality of existence, that is, the reality of beings that we really know, recedes to the background. The only thing that matters is whether something has its reason for being in itself or outside of itself. If it has its reason for being outside of itself, it is merely possible. Only God is being, because God has his reason for being in himself.

This is a view of being from God's perspective, and, for God, everything apart from himself is possibility. However, when as the next step in this way of philosophizing we refer to possibility as possibility, then what is possible apprehended from its own side will be what can exist or not exist, and is indifferent in itself to existence or non-existence.[15] If a possibility comes into existence it is only because an external cause has started to act. In that perspective, necessity is most important in philosophy, and possibility comes after necessity.

Here' we see the other side of the coin, because possibility based on the absence of necessary existence levels the difference between potency and possibility. Potency is then also only possibility because it also does not possess necessary existence. To sum up, possibility and potency, substance and accidents, form and substance are possible. In that case, Avicenna reasoned, we can look at the whole problem differently. If possibility is so rich while it stands aside of existence, can we cognitively express that wealth? That becomes the task of metaphysics. We must ask whether this was metaphysics or the future ontology.

Avicenna did not pose the problem of possibility from the Aristotelian perspective, but in a different one. A new element appears, which is existence; existence is different from substance or essence. Aristotle did not take the element of existence into account, since he was concerned with knowing reality, which, for him, had been taken over by substance or essence.

Existence appears as something different from substance or essence, and substance-essence ceases to be responsible for reality, because reality comes

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15   "*Cette position se rattache étroitement à la conception du possible telle qu'elle a été décrite: considéré en lui-même, celui-ci peut exister et peut aussi ne pas exister; qu'il existe ou n'existe pas cela dépendra d'une cause autre que lui; de soi il est indifférent à l'existence ou à la non-existence*" (Such a postition is close to the conception of the possible as was described: considered in itself it can exist, but also it can not exist; whether it exists or not it depends upon another cause; in itself it is indifferent to existence and non-existence), see Geert Verbeke, "Le statut de la Métaphysique" [The Status of Metaphysics], in Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, 53.

from existence. Then the way is open for the question: what is substance-essence taken in itself? Just as Aristotle wanted to remain within the realm of reality and did not single out existence as an element of being, he had to give substance a double dimension, as it were (the dimension of content, and of existence), so as soon as existence was singled out (first by Al-Farabi), then substance-essence considered in itself would only contain content. As content it would not possess anything immanent indicating that it is a real content.

Therefore, the discovery of existence in being as a new element different from substance, the discovery made by Arabic philosophers, resulted, in the first phase, that existence became cognitively independent of reality. That meant that this discovery broke the boundary that Aristotle set, and stepped into the sphere of the possible. Among essences (from the point of view of their contents) there was no difference between those that possessed existence and those that did not, because each existence could come from the outside to each essence.

At that point, the distinction, a distinction that was crucial for Aristotle, between essence, which could be defined because it is real, and the meaning of the term of what is merely possible ceased to be binding. Every meaning (so long as it was non-contradictory), was a counterpart of an essence, but not every essence was a real being; only an essence that possessed existence was real. Real existence was external to essence, and real existence came to essence as the result of the action of an external cause, God alone. However, existence did not modify the content of an essence; hence, an essence could be defined in itself as possible and not real.

The discovery of existence in its initial phase was a Pyrrhic victory for metaphysics. Although philosophers noticed the most important element of being that made something real, still, the analysis of existence proceeded in such a way that in turn the chief category of being, namely substance, fell outside the orbit of real being and was found in the realm of the possible. In that state of affairs, metaphysics could be transformed into the study of essence qua essence, regardless of whether it was a real essence. That was the direction that Avicenna took. When he thought that it did not matter for essence whether it was connected with substance, he was able to concern himself with essences alone. Metaphysics became the science of essences and the analysis of possible being.

In that context, we can better understand the threefold way of looking at essence-nature that Avicenna presented in his *Book on the First Philosophy or Divine Science* (*Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*). When he took up the problem of the status of universals, he already had three perspectives at his disposal. The first perspective was actual predication of many individuals

(for example, the word 'man' predicated of particular people); the second perspective was the mere possibility of predication, although nothing of the sort needed to exist (for example, the noun seven-cornered house would be predicated of a building only when someone built such a house); the third perspective was also the possibility of predicating something of many things, although in fact only one individual existed (for example, we predicate something of the earth or sun in the belief that for now there is only one earth and one sun, but without precluding that there could be many suns or more than one earth).[16]

We see clearly that the center of gravity is shifted to the concept or meaning. A concept or meaning can be defined without looking to a concretely existing thing or to the scope of predication. Hence, Avicenna's famous sentence, "*equinitas ergo in se est equinitas tantum*" (horseness is in itself only horseness).[17] The definition of an essence-nature contains only its content but does not take a position to real existence or to the plurality of the things designated. Avicenna called such a nature a third nature (*natura tertia*). Although from the point of view of the existing being, the third nature is only a possible being, the third nature is most important for metaphysics, not insofar as the nature-substance exists, whether in a plurality of individuals (first nature), or as the content of concepts (second nature).

In philosophy, Avicenna's 'liberation' of nature - essence - substance from existence weighed heavily on the shift in the object of metaphysics from real being to possible being. In such a state of affairs, if after the discovery of existence there is no return to the Aristotelian conception of being, then how essence-substance and being are understood, and in general how the object of metaphysics is understood, will depend on how existence is understood.

When Avicenna departed from Aristotle's metaphysics, he fundamentally changed how nature - essence - substance was understood as the object of metaphysical inquiries. Substance, nature, or essence did not need to be real, but they could be the object of metaphysics, and it was enough if they were possible.

The Concept of Being and Possible Being: From Duns Scotus to Suárez

Scotus had the next move. His metaphysics did not deal with being but with the concept of being. The exposition of the concept of being as the object of

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16   Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, v, cap. 1.

17   Ibid.

metaphysics, and not simply as being, was done in a completely deliberate manner. As we remember, Scotus thought that metaphysics was the highest science, and as such was the human mode of knowledge that encompassed all reality, including God. It would be possible to include God in metaphysical knowledge only if our intellect formed a large enough concept of being, because the unity of all reality is found only at the level of a concept. Without unity, there was no science. At the level of knowledge, Scotus rejected analogical unity, and so what remained was equivocity or univocity. Equivocity obviously closes the path to the unity of science. Univocity remains and it is the univocity of a concept.

What does such a concept contain? It is different from the concept of form, nature, or essence, in which contents are found that correspond to some species or genus, and so the contents are relatively rich, but thereby are limited to that species or that genus. The content contained in the concept of being must be as broad as possible. It must be broad enough to take in being as a whole, both created being and God. The content of the concept of being must then not be the richest in content, but must be the poorest in content, because each new element would limit its content. The most important thing for Scotus was that the concept of being could be predicated of each and every being. He thought that he had found such a content, and it was non-contradiction. Non-contradiction is the common property of everything that we call being.[18]

This is true, but non-contradiction does not show the difference between real being and possible being because possible being is also non-contradictory. Scotus could have responded that this was too bad, but thereby there was one concept of being, one object of knowledge, and once science. In the framework of that science further specifications could be made. There would be the division between necessary and non-necessary being, finite and infinite being, and actual and possible being. Among those terms, the concept of non-contradictory being is closest to the concept of possible being, while the concept of actual being would be merely one of the varieties of being, but not the most important variety of being for metaphysics.[19]

In this way, the attempt to find the broadest property of the concept of being led to the situation that the concept of being was shifted from real being

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18   Mieczyslaw Albert Krąpiec, *Byt i istota. Św. Tomasza "De ente et essentia" przekład i komentarz* [Being and Essence. A Translation of, and Commentary on St. Thomas's "De ente et essence"], 2nd ed. (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1994), 167–187.

19   Ibid., 180–181.

to the concept of being, and in the framework of the concept of being it was shifted to the concept of possible being.

Just as Parmenides's univocal understanding of the principle of identity led to the concept of being exclusively as absolute being, in which there was no room for real being as mutable and composite, so in turn the univocal understanding of the principle of non-contradiction led Scotus to the concept of possible being in which there was room for real being, but no distinctive element of the concept of being qua being indicated this any longer. Scotus's concept of being is mainly the concept of possible being.[20]

If, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works on metaphysics (or ontology), we read that they have as their object being as identified with possible being, that is a continuation of a way of cultivating philosophy that took shape in the Middle Ages due to Avicenna and Scotus.

Did modern ontologists really consider the sources of their views? There is much that suggests that they did not, because names such as Avicenna and Scotus are not mentioned in their works.[21]

What was the source from which the Avicennian and Scotist conception of being entered ontology? The answer is well known, it was mainly because of Francisco Suárez. His *Disputationes Metaphysicae* have been considered the most important channel of Greek and medieval philosophy to modernity.[22]

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20   Moreover, Scotus, wanting to reconcile the concept of possible being with the requirements of Aristotelian methodology, combined possibility with necessity. If something is not contradictory, then by necessity, it is possible (*ipsum esse possibile esse est necessarium, quia non includit contradictionem ad esse*); cf. *Lectura in librum primum Sententiarum* [Reading the First Book of the Sentences], d. 2, nr 57, XVI, 131; quoted in Rolf Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses. Studien zur Vorgeschichte des neuzeitlichen Seinsbegriffs im Mittelater* [The Transformation of the Classical Understanding of Being: Studies on the History of the Modern Concept of Being in the Middle Ages] (Berlin, 1986), 328.

21   Christian Wolff, in his 700-page *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, wrote nothing about Avicenna, and the name of Duns Scotus appears only once, and that is in the index. By contrast, in the main text, we read about the problem of individuation, which the scholastics were supposed to have connected with *haecceitas* ("*Scholasticis idem venit nomine Haecceitas*"); cf. Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia* [First Philosophy or Ontology], 3rd ed., ed. Jean Ecole (Hildesheim: Olms, 2001), pt. 1, Sec. 3, cap. 2, para. 228. Scotus appears here simply as a philosopher who was representative of scholasticism; this was not with respect to how he understood being, but a question (the individuation of being) in which medieval philosophers presented very diverse views, and for which Scotus's position was not at all representative. This shows how Wolff's knowledge of the history of philosophy was poor.

22   Aubenque, "Suárez et l'avènement du concept d'être," 11. Heidegger wrote as follows on this topic: "With the peculiar character which the Scholastics gave it, Greek ontology has,

That work was regarded as the compendium of knowledge about ancient and medieval metaphysics.

Was Suárez's metaphysics really representative of medieval metaphysics, and was such representation even possible? In the thirteenth century, two different approaches to how being should be understood were in conflict: namely, the theory of Scotus and the theory of Thomas Aquinas. Those theories did not share a common denominator; hence, it would have been impossible for one position to represent both, but at most one of them. Upon closer analysis, it turns out that Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae*, although the work gave the impression of a super-system that arose above previous currents of scholastic philosophy such as Augustinianism, Bonaventurianism, Thomism, Scotism, and nominalism, was still an expression of support for the views of Scotus. In the conception of being, Suárez rejected the views of the Thomists and supported Scotus.[23]

This can be seen in his reference to the concept of possible being, which became the main concept for the understanding of being. Suárez clearly said, following Cajetan, that real being was obviously such that it was not devised in our thought, and it actually exists; but elsewhere he greatly expanded the concept of being.[24] Being is also that which is not a fiction and is capable of

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in its essentials, traveled the path that leads through the *Disputationes metaphysicae* of Suárez to the 'metaphysics' and transcendental philosophy of modern times, determining even the foundations and the aims of Hegel's 'logic'"; cf. *Being and Time*, 43–44). Curiously, Heidegger made a peculiar reversal of terms: he writes of ancient ontology when there was metaphysics, but when modern ontology arises, he used the word metaphysics.

23   Pereira, "The Achievement of Suárez and the Suárezianization of Thomism," 136. However, the submission to Scotus does not appear only in metaphysics. In twenty-six volumes of Suárez's works published in the years 1856 through 1861 in Paris, almost 2,000 references to Duns Scotus by name have been identified; cf. E. Elorduy, "Duns Scoti influxus in Francisci Suárez doctrinam" [The Influx of the Doctrine of Duns Scotus in Suárez], in *Congressus Scotisticus Internationalis. De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, 307.

24   "*Unde recte Caietanus, de Ente et essentia, c. 4, q. 5, ait ens reale dupliciter accipi: uno modo, ut distinguitur contra ens fabricatum ab intellectu (quod proprie est ens rationis); alio modo ut distinguitur contra non existens actu*" (Cajetan rightly said in his *On being and essence*, c. 4, q. 5 that real being can be taken in two ways: one way as distinguished from being made by the intellect (which is properly called being of reason); another way as distinguished from being which exists actually"); Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 31, Sec. 2, 10); cf. John P. Doyle, "Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles," *Modern Schoolman* 45 (1967): 33–34; Jeans-François Courtine, "Le statut ontologique du possible selon Suárez" [The Ontological Status of the Possible in Suárez]. *Cuadernos salmantinos de filosofia* 7 (1980): 246–266.

existence.[25] Such expressions as *aptum ad esse* (apt to be) and *aptum ad existendum* (apt to exist) would be generally used in modern ontologies, including Wolff's ontology, as crucial for determining the object of ontology, and then were used when the German idealists constructed systems of philosophy.[26] Those formulas come from Suárez. Therefore, we must take a closer look at his system.

If that which does not actually exist but is capable of existing is being, then at that point, the understanding of being shifts to the level of possible being, because, while possible being does not exist, it can come into existence. Such being is not a mental being (*ens rationis*) or fictional (*non fictum*). Everything apart from that can be called being, from possible being all the way to God, because after all, God exists and is all the more capable of existence. By such a conception of being, Suárez achieved his goal, which was to produce a single concept of being that would refer both to possible being and to God.[27]

How did Suárez try to demonstrate that the concept of being referred to possibility and not only to what actually existed? He analyzed the Latin term '*ens*' and remarked that being can be considered in a twofold supposition. It can be considered as the answer to the question 'what is it?' (*quid est?*), and as the answer to the question 'is it?' (*an sit?*). The word '*ens*' from the grammatical point of view is a participle (*participium*). A participle can emphasize the aspect of the verb or the noun.[28] When it points to the verb, then '*ens*' describes something that participates in the act of existence (*actus essendi*), and existence somehow precise (*praecisive*), makes particular the essence. '*Ens*' as a

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25   "in prima ratione quidditatis realis intrat aptitudo ad existendum, et in hoc primo distinguitur quidditas realis a non reali seu ficta" (into the first reason for the real essence comes the aptitude to exist, and in this first reason there is a difference between real essence and the essence which is not real but fictive);Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 3, Sec. 2, 4; "Et in superioribus, tractando de conceptu entis, ostendimus non solum sub illo comprehendi id quod actu est, sed etiam quod aptum est esse" (Earlier, treating about the concept of being, we showed not only that it contains what is in act, but also what is apt to exist); ibid., disp. 31, Sect. 2, 10.

26   Schelling emphasized the role of Suárez. Schelling connected possibility with the question of the origin of possibility, and with concepts such as essence, ideas, and eternal truths. This had already found its classical expression in the views of Augustine; cf. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 247.

27   Doyle. "Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles," 39.

28   The Latin word '*participium*' comes from the verb '*participare*' (to participate, to take part in). In the case of *participium*, we have a grammatical form that partcipates in part in a noun (*nomen*—name), and in a verb (*verbum*—a verb).

noun does not refer to the existence that a being actually possesses, but refers to the essence. In that case, *ens* in the second sense, if it does not designate the actual existence of a being, means something that can exist. What can exist in a being is the essence, or the noun-substance, not the act-existence-verb.

Suárez concludes that '*ens*' as a noun is more fundamental than '*ens*' taken as a verb, because the possibility of existence is broader in scope than actual existence. What exists does exist and can exist. Thus, actual existence is only a species of what can exist. What can exist comes to the center stage of philosophical inquiries, and being qua being is understood as possible being.[29]

What was the possibility that is typical of the concept of being? Why was only mental or fictional being excluded from the concept of being? Here Suárez followed the line of Scotus. Fictional being is not so much our free thoughts as it is something internally contradictory, something that we can only think of and which exists only because we think it. For that reason it is called a mental being (*ens rationis*). A fictional being is mental in the sense that it exists only as thought of, and otherwise it could not exist. This is because the fictional being is contradictory, and a contradiction cannot come into existence, although we may think about it. However, so long as anything is, it is non-contradictory and it is possible, and, as possible, it is a being.

If everything that is non-contradictory is a being, then in such a case, that which is non-contradictory, not only ontologically but also simply in a logical sense, is a being. Logical possibility underlies ontological possibility.[30] We do not need to know really (actually) existing reality because our knowledge begins from possibility, that is, from logic.

In such a case, would logic be prior not only to metaphysics, but also to ontology? Is logic the first philosophy that the ancient philosophers sought? For the time being, the answer was still no, but that would happen in the second half of the nineteenth century. What would be the purpose of those speculations on possible being, non-contradiction, and the capacity for existence? Philosophy arose not from a sense of wonder about human thoughts, but in a confrontation with reality, with the world around human beings. That world in itself was not intelligible, and the philosopher wanted to know the world.

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29   "L'être en puissance ou l'être possible (*ens possible*) disent plus que *l'ens ut sic* (*nominaliter sumptum*), même si ce surplus ne vise qu'une détermination négative ou privative: celle du pas encore, *la privatio actualis existentiae*" (Being in potency or possible being (*ens possible*) say more than being as such (*nominaliter sumptum*), even if this 'more' is related to some negative determination or lack : what is not yet, *la privatio actualis existentiae*); Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 297–298.

30   Doyle. "Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles," 40–41.

Here, philosophy would be an analysis of the concept of possible being, that is, the analysis of non-contradictory possibilities. But for what purpose?

Possible Being and Theology

It turns out that the bottom of the problem was yet deeper because those speculations on possible being reached to theology. To understand the whole context of the birth of ontology, we must look to theology.

Let us recall that in the context of the controversy over the object of metaphysics, Avicenna's followers held that the object of metaphysics was being apprehended in such a way that it included God and the creature. The result was that the conception of being would be defined in such a way that God and the creature would fit within it. According to Scotus, such a concept would have minimal content, and that content would be common to being as a whole. The content turned out to be non-contradiction, because it is common to God and to the creature. But that was only the first step.

The second step concerned God himself. God was no longer the Olympian Zeus, the Platonic Demiurge, Aristotle's self-thinking thought, the Plotinian One, but the omnipotent God-Creator. They began to investigate not only what God created, because that could be known in the world around us as from God, but more profoundly, they began to investigate how the act of creation looked, and what God could create in general, which would be crucial for the rise of future ontology. Since God is omnipotent and free, then God could have created more than he actually created. What more could God have created? Basically the answer here was not too complicated, because the limit of God's power had to be found, but that limit was understood in a purely negative way. The limit was found and it was contradiction. Contradiction as such was excluded and as such was destroyed, because what we affirm is at the same time negated.

In such a case, contradiction sets the only limit for divine omnipotence. The only thing that God could not create was what was internally contradictory. Everything else, and so everything that was non-contradictory, could be created by God. God, as omnipotent, could create anything that is possible, that is, he could give it actual existence, because what is non-contradictory is capable of existence. Possibility is a reason for being. God as omnipotent could create everything that was possible. Such a non-contradictory being would contain nothing that would prevent it from coming into existence, and for this reason a non-contradictory being could be called a real being.[31]

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31   "*Priori modo dicimus essentiam realem esse, quae in se nullam involvit repugnantiam*" (According to the first mode we say that the essence is real, if it does not contain any

For that reason, Aristotelian potency, of which the reference point was the structure of real being that we know in the world such as we find it, was replaced by logical possibility. On one hand, logical possibility was sufficient, because non-contradiction was simply logical possibility. On the other, logical possibility acquires its force when we connect it with theological possibility. Theological possibility is logical possibility that sets the field of God's creative action. As a result, logical possibility became much stronger that the potency of which Aristotle had written. Possibility in the Aristotelian sense was an element of the structure of real being that existed in the material world, while possibility was a derivative of potency, a derivative understood as a pure human thought, while logical-theological possibility is positively present in God as something that precedes all possible creation, and only as what precedes the actually existing thing. A possibility is a divine thought, and so it is something more important than being derived from God.[32]

God as absolutely omnipotent can create everything that is logically possible, and the non-contradictory is the logically possible. Modern ontology has its genesis in theology because the center of gravity was shifted from real being to possibility for theological reasons, not for metaphysical reasons.

Reality here is described not by reference to existence, but by the possibility of being thought by God. This is because the very possibility of being thought allows God to create a being that he has thought in one act of the will. That which cannot be thought of positively, and such as contradictory being, also cannot be created.[33] Reality primarily means the possibility of being thought. This is because the possibility of being thought means in the case of God the possibility of being created. Everything that is not impossible, is possible for God to create. Hence, this essence without existence as non-contradictory can

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repugnancy); Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 2, Sec. 4, 7; Doyle, *Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles*, 42.

32 Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 250; Courtine, "Le statut ontologique du possible selon Suárez," 254–258.

33 "*L'acte créateur de Dieu, le passage de l'essence réelle à l'essence actuelle, est subordonnée à la réalité de l'essence, c'est-à-dire à sa pensabilité pour l'entendemnet de Dieu, mais aussi pour tout entendement, s'il est vrai que la realitas n'est plus définie par référence à l'existence qui l'actualiser, mais par opposition au rien (nihil), c'est-à-dire à impensable*" (Divine act of creation, a passage from real to actual essence, is subordinated to the reality of essence, it means its possibility to be thought by the intellect of God, and also by every intellect, if it is true that reality is not defined by its relation to existence, which it actualizes, but in opposition to nothingness); Aubenque, "Suárez et l'avènement du concept d'être," 17. Nothingness is contradiction. We can utter a contradiction, but at the level of understanding, a contradiction is unthinkable in the sense that the intellectual destruction of the contradiction occurs at the semantic level.

already be called a real essence (*essentia realis*).[34] It is real in itself because existence, which in the act of creation comes upon essence is also thereby something external to essence, and so existence does not modify essence. The essence is real because the very essence, so long as it is non-contradictory, can be created by God, which means existence can be joined to it.

Existence as the act of real being recedes to the background, because such existence is already a 'purely' technical question. God as omnipotent can impart existence to anything whatsoever as long as it is non-contradictory. It is only a question of an act of divine will, and acts of divine will are inscrutable to the human intellect. We do not know why God creates some possibilities and not others, but we do know that he can create any possibility. Hence, the analyses of philosophers were focused primarily on the content of being, that is, on the content of the concept of possible being. As thought of, and so as possible, that being was already treated as real, because that was indicated by the theological context. Possibility and reality did not differ with respect to content.[35]

For the philosophers who were in the current of the ideas of Scotus, the most intriguing thing was not whether God could create, because it was evident that he could, but what God could create. To answer that question, metaphysical speculations on the concept of being were needed. Those speculations led to a shift in the center of gravity in metaphysics from real being, not only to the concept of being, but to the concept of possible being. This is because possible being was for God the field of creative action.

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34   Courtine, Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 302; Blanchette, "Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology," 10.

35   In this respect, the Arabic philosophers looked at things differently. Al-Farabi thought that if essence as non-contradiction is found in God's intellect, then it must be made real, while Avicenna, in a desire to emphasize God's greatness, says that essences are so poor that they do not deserve to be made real; Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*), 134–136). If we accept the influence of Neoplatonic emanationism and necessarianism on Arabic philosophy and thought, then Al-Farabi's position would be the most coherent. It is noteworthy here that in the Quran, the word '*jalaka*' appears, which does not necessarily mean the process of creating, because it could just as well be creation as the thing created. Therefore, creation in the Quran is not exaggerated; Ozcoidi, *La conception de la filosofía en Averroes*, 114–115. This is obvious, because otherwise, creationism would be reconciled with emanationism, while emanationism cannot be creationism: creationism is creation out of nothing, not out of matter that is already present, or even out of God. Emanation is creation out of God, but this, according to Al-Farabi and Avicenna, does not stand in contradiction to creationism; Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*), 124.

That was not the end of the matter. Philosophers were intrigued by possible beings already in God's intellect. Metaphysics increasingly became theology that analyzed God's internal life, and then, logic stood above theology. Suárez analyzed the divine ideas as pure possibilities and asked: Are those possibilities something in themselves? Are they something that is intelligible and true in itself independent of God, something that even God must reckon with? The answers were affirmative. Possibilities are something in themselves, and in a negative sense they are equal to *God*.[36] Logic advanced in front of metaphysics, and also in front of theology. The speculations on the concept of being went so far that they passed from metaphysics to logic, then to theology, and then returned to logic. Metaphysics as the theory of really existing being had to recede into the distance and basically became unnecessary because the analysis of possible being became a much more sublime work than the analysis of real existing being, which was a completely prosaic matter. Why should concepts be compared with reality? Concepts are eternally true and eternally knowable, while reality is fragile, contingent, material, and does not bring anything to knowledge, because it is only a narrowing of what is contained in possibilities.

As a result, those speculations were not so much metaphysical as logical-theological, the sphere of being was expanded beyond reality and beyond God. The concept of being as possible was possible independently of God, of God's power and knowledge. God also must reckon with the principle of non-contradiction. That does mean that after metaphysics was changed into theology, theology was changed into ontology, and then into logic. That logic-ontology, which was already without theology (because why speak of God, if possible being does not depend on God), would become over the course of time the most important domain of philosophy.

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36   "*Si autem posteriori modo concipiatur illa non repugnantia ex parte creaturarum, plane est tam necessaria in sua negatione, sicut Verbum in suo esse actuali, quia est sine dependentia ab alio in illa non repugnantia. Tota autem necessitas Dei est necessitas independentiae, ergo in hoc est aequalitas. Neque hoc est inconveniens, quia non est aequalitas in re positiva, sed in negatione quadam*" (If a possible being [*illa non repugnantia*], as seen from the viewpoint of creatures, is conceived in an a posteriori mode, obviously it is necessary in its negation, just as the Divine Word [*Verbum*] is necessary in its actual existence, because it is without any dependence from something else in its non-repugnance [to existence]. All necessity of God is a necessity of independence, so in this there is equality. And it is not dissimilar, because it is not equality in a positive way, but in a certain negative way); Francisco Suárez, *Commentaria ac Disputationes in primam partem D. Thomae De Deo un-get trino* [Commentaries and Disputations on the First Part of Divine Thomas On God One and Triune] (Venice, 1740), tr. 3, lib. 9, cap. 6, 19; Doyle. "Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles," 46–47; Courtine, "Le statut ontologique du possible selon Suárez" 264–265.

It was a winding road to the ontologies of our time. The road did not go directly from metaphysics, but through theology, and that was theology in the version started by Avicenna and Scotus. The crowning point of that theology was ontological logic, which ignores both actually existing reality and God, and so ignores metaphysics and theology.

Thus, when, because of theology, metaphysics was separated from really existing being and transformed into ontology; in turn, ontology itself was separated from God, because it turned out that at the level of possible being God did not cognitively bring in anything. We cannot create really existing being, but just like God we can think up for ourselves possible beings, and what is more, we can even think them up without God. Possibilities taken in themselves are eternally true, ready to be known, even if there were no God; moreover, if they were not such as they are, there would be no God, and no creatures originating from God.[37]

In the end, ontology was not the fruit of a peculiar idea of philosophy, but of a theology. Although that theology obviously grew from a certain philosophy, still, as the result of theological speculations, metaphysics was transformed into ontology, the science of the concept of possible being. Since purely logical non-contradiction set the limit of possibility, logic could move ahead of metaphysics, especially metaphysics as classically understood, in the framework of philosophy. Classical metaphysics investigates really existing beings, but they are derivative beings, while logic, as it were, reads in the thoughts of God, because as non-contradictory those thoughts must be 'God's thoughts.' Later they become something higher than God's thoughts. They become something in themselves.

Here is the origin of the modern cult of logic (and mathematics), and of the devaluation of metaphysics. Yet that impoverished logic arose as the result of certain metaphysical and theological slips, after which there was no way back to the everyday order. We must turn around and elucidate those moments

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37   "*Et ideo ad demonstrandum Deum esse, non satis est ostendere dari in rerum natura ens quoddam necessarium et a se, nisi etiam probetur illud esse unicum et tale ut sit fons totius esse, a qui pendent, et illud recipiunt omni, quae ipsum esse quoquo modo participant*" (And therefore, in order to demonstrate the existence of God, it is not sufficient to show in the nature of things a being which is necessary, and by itself, unless it is also proved that it is unique and is the source of all being, upon which everything depends, is received by everything, and which participates in some way in the existence of all things; Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 29, Sec. 2, 5; cf. Doyle. "Suárez on the Reality of the Possibles," 48.

where being was identified with a concept, and possibility was regarded as more important than reality. Without such reflection, philosophy will not find its proper object, and other sciences, including the formal sciences, will gladly take the place of metaphysics, but those sciences are incapable of knowing or explaining that which really exists.

Existence: Act or Modus?

The shift in emphasis from being to the concept of being, from real being to possible being, that we observe in the history of metaphysics, and which led to the rise of ontology, brings us face-to-face with a key question: What is the place of existence in being, and in the conception of being that corresponds to it on the side of theory?

When existence appeared in philosophical reflection (around the tenth century CE), it became necessary to explain how it was understood from the point of view of the structure of being, and how, in terms of function, it performs in the context of other elements. It is clear that, since the time existence was introduced in philosophical analysis, it could not be completely ignored in philosophy. But the existence spoken of was not equal in all cases.

In some theories, existence would be put on center stage. In other theories, existence was more or less marginalized. In yet other theories, the emphasis shifted to what is more or less real from what is purely mental or ideal. The key problem is connected with the answer to the question: is existence the reason for the reality of being? If so, what sort of existence, and what sort of being?

Various ontologies did not negate existence, but the problem was that the existence possessed by what we normally call real beings receded to the background. The existence of mental beings, possible beings, ideas, or concepts came to the center stage. In that case, metaphysics became ontology.

Let us examine more closely the context in which the problem of existence appeared in the common, terminological, and philosophical sense.

When we speak in ordinary language about existence, what we have in mind is that something is real, as distinct from what is not, is not yet, or is no longer. When we say 'John exists,' we want to emphasize that John is, that is, John exists, and the opposite would be the death of John, when he is no longer, or the absence of John, because he has not yet been conceived. In other cases, when we speak of existence, we indicate the difference between reality and a being that is merely thought of. This concerns especially our projects or plans, because the plan of a house is one thing, and the completed or constructed house is something else. There are many other nuances that could be recognized if we analyze what we have in mind when we speak of existence on the level of common sense. But one thing is beyond doubt: that true existence is real existence, in proper proportion to that which exists, and so it concerns the existence of the concrete individual human being, animal, or tree, not the

existence of our concepts or mental images of a man, animal, or tree. When we ask in our normal life about the existence of anything whatsoever, we have in mind that the thing should be real, not merely imagined, understood, no longer existing, or not yet existing.

In philosophy, which is difficult for an average person or even for an educated non-philosopher to understand, everything becomes complicated—so complicated that what is thought of becomes more real than what is real, and what is real (as normally understood) even ceases to be treated generally as real.

Existence: Etymology of the Term

Related to the English word 'existence,' two terms appear in Greek: '*einai*' (is/ to be) and '*huparchei*' (actually is). We find the second term in Homer in the meaning of to start.[1] The first term appears later in Hesiod. The form *einai* is used once when Hesiod writes that the immortal goddess Styx came to Zeus with her children, and Zeus honored her by giving her many gifts and promised her that her children would always dwell with him (*paidas d'êmata panta heou metanaietas einai*: and their sons shall stay with him forever).[2] The form *eisin* (I am, I exist) appears in the context of the myth of Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, who joined with divine Hermes and gave birth to Dionysius, and then, Hesiod explains, both of them (the mortal Semele, and her immortal son) '*are* gods' (*theoi eisin*).[3] We may also note that at the beginning of our era, the Neoplatonists used the word '*hyphistanai*' which meant fulfillment or occurrence.[4]

From a grammatical point of view, the Greek words were infinitives or verbs used in various forms. In Greek, there was no noun form corresponding to the Latin '*existentia*' (existence) that would indicate existence as a special element belonging to the structure of being. The forms of the infinitive 'to be' (is, are, etc.) confirmed that something truly is, just as takes place in common-sense language and knowledge, but this was not followed by reflection on the specific character of existence, rather the focus was on the content of an existing being. The Greek language did not allow the investigation of something from the side of existence, rather than from the side of content.

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1   *Odyssey*, 24, 286.

2   Hes., *Th*. 401.

3   Ibid., 150.

4   Krąpiec, "Istnienie" [Existence]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 5:44.

The Latin word for existence was initially spelled as '*exsistentia*' rather than '*existentia*.' The root of the word is '*sisto*,' which means to set, to establish, to exhibit, or, to raise. In connection with '*ex*,' it meant 'to come out of' (*ex-sisto*), to extract, to grow, to rise, but also to appear, to come out, to be born, or, to arise. It was also used in the sense of 'to be,' but as a grammatical copula in a sentence, as a word of reinforcement instead of '*esse*.' Among Christian writers, it was treated as a subsistent being or a being that remained alive.[5]

In the third and fourth century CE, Chalcidius translated into Latin the Platonic expression '*to de ontos onti*' found in *Timaeus* (52c), which we render as true being, while in Plato, it was a repetition of the same word in order to reinforce its meaning, and so literally it would be 'being being.' Chalcidius used the Latin expression '*enim vere existentium rerum* (the true existence of things).' The word '*existentia*' appears here, but it does not directly designate existence qua existence. Rather, the word is colored by Platonism, because it indicates the eternal mode of existence proper to the ideas.

Another fragment concerns the category of being called place. In that passage, Plato mentions three kinds of being. The first kind are beings that neither come into being nor perish, but keep their identity and are eternal; the second kind are those that come into being, change, and perish; the third kind are beings that are eternal and various things are found in them. Things that are not in any place (on Earth or in Heaven) are not at all.[6] Chalcidius translates this expression, 'are not at all' (*ouden einei*) as '*minime existere*,' that is, that which exists in the least degree possible.

The word '*existentia*' appears one more time in Chalcidius's commentary on the *Timaeus*, where he translates 'three beings' (*tria auta onta*) as three '*existentia*.' Candidus Arianus (fourth century CE) used expressions such as '*existens*'(existing), '*existential*' (existential), and '*existentialitas*' (existentiality) in reference to what is in the Platonic sense, thus indicating permanence, because for Plato that would be the most important criterion for something to be a being.

In the Middle Ages, the word '*existentia*' was also used in as in classical Latin, that is, in a genetic sense. It included both a theological and a philosophical sense. It is used in reference to the Holy Trinity, that is, the Divine Persons, and then human persons. When Thomas Aquinas had existence in mind, he used

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5   Marian Plezia and Maria Chigerowa, Eds. *Słownik łacińsko-polski* [Latin-Polish Dictionary] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), 2:457–458, s.v. *ex-sistō*.

6   Cic., *Tim.* 52b.

the word '*esse*' and not '*existentia.*' In turn, Giles of Rome spoke of existence as existing in act (*actu existere*).[7]

The Arabic language draws a distinction between '*wujud*' (of which the Latin counterpart was *esse*), and '*mawjud*' (of which the Latin counterpart was *ens*), but these did not underlie the triliteral Arabic root *wāw jīm dāl* (roughly meaning in English 'to find'). In the active form, *wajada* meant that someone found something, and secondarily, that someone possessed something or, acquired something. In the passive form, as '*wujida,*' it indicated that something had taken place, that something existed. In turn, the participle '*mawjud*' meant that something existed. In the etymological sense, '*mawjud*' refers to something that has received existence, and so, it is a created being, while the Latin word '*ens*' does not contain such a limitation. '*Mawjud*' can also mean (although not etymologically) that which has no beginning or end, and so it can mean God. The plural, '*mawjudat,*' referring to many beings, also includes the Creator. It is worth noting that in the Arabic language, 'is' is basically not used as a copula, but it is enough to put the subject and predicate next to each other. In connection with this, the word is occurs very rarely in Arabic. The word '*kana,*' which corresponds to 'existence' and '*esse,*' has a completely different meaning. It did not mean the most general idea of existence, but belonged to a group of terms describing the state and circumstances existence, time and place. In the Arabic language, the words connected with existence did not have a purely existential sense. Hence, the Arabic language did not make it easy to deal with existence in its special existential function.[8]

The word '*existence*' entered the French language at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Scipion Dupleix, Descartes). The word came into English somewhat later and meant actuality and reality as opposed to illusion, and in its second meaning it indicates the act of existence.[9]

In summary, in the medieval and modern period, the word 'existence' was not intended exclusively to expound on the existential aspect of being as different from the side of essence or content. Even today, the word 'existence'

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7 Giles of Rome explains that by actuality, which material beings possess because of form, they are knowable [*intellegibiles*], and by the actuality that they receive from existence, they exist [*existant*]"; *Theorems on Existence and Essence* (*Theoremata de esse et essentia*), ed. and trans. Michael Vivian Murray (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1952), x.

8 Amélie-Marie Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne et son influence en Europe médiévale* [The Philosophy of Avicenna and His Influence on Medieval Europe], 2nd ed. (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1951), 61–62; Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'apres Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*), 16–17.

9 Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, 348.

as 'already present' in most European languages does not necessary mean existence (as formally different from content), but may be used to expound upon or emphasize some deeper or specific dimension of being, especial human being (existentialism as a philosophical current). Hence, to see the specific character of existence and of the controversy over existence, etymological or linguistic analyses are not enough, but we should enter into philosophy, especially the formed theory of being.

Did Aristotle Know the Difference between Essence and Existence?

The discovery of existence as different from the content of a being, or more precisely, as different from essence, happened very late in philosophy. Interestingly, it was not an intellectual shock or metaphysical revolution. It took up to three centuries for the question to be the object of deeper analyses and to influence a basic change in the conception of being, at least in one of the currents of philosophy.

Why did the discovery of existence not bring any major changes initially in philosophy? The answer is simple enough. Neither Al Farabi (870–950 CE), one of the first Arabic philosophers, to whom historians of philosophy attribute the discovery of existence and the idea that existence is different from essence, nor Avicenna, who regarded that difference as binding, thought of it as a discovery. They thought that Aristotle already knew it. If Aristotle knew it, then the mention of existence could not bring anything new into philosophical discussions.

Among the later commentators, the prevalent opinion was that when Al Farabi and Avicenna referred to existence, they had in mind the passage from the *Posterior Analytics* (2, 7, 92b 10), where Aristotle remarked on the difference between the statement that something is and that question of what it is.[10] If one looks superficially and without historical awareness at this passage, at first glance, it appears that Aristotle must have known the difference between existence and essence. After all, today when we say that something is, we have existence in mind, and when we ask what it is, we are concerned with its essence. The Polish translator of the *Posterior Analytics* suggested such an approach when he writes, "and yet the essence of man and the fact of his existence are two different things."[11] In an English version, the translation looks somewhat different: "and what human nature is and the fact that man exists

10   Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, 131.

11   Aristot., *An. Post.* II, 7, 92b10, trans. G.R.G. Mure, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard Peter McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

are not the same thing?"[12] In the English translation, there is no mention of essence as in the Polish translation but it speaks of nature, and in the English translation, it is precisely stated that it is a question of humanity's existence and not of the existence of a nature (or essence). Despite this, the word 'exists' appears, which suggests a difference between the order of essence (as nature) and existence. Meanwhile, the matter is not so simple, and so we must return to Aristotle's original text:

> ἀλλὰ μὴν εἰ δείξει τί ἐστι καὶ ὅτι ἔστι, πῶς τῶι αὐτῶι λόγωι δείξει; ὅ τε γὰρ ὁρισμὸς ἕν τι δηλοῖ καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις· τὸ δὲ τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἄνθρωπον ἄλλο.[13]

> (But further, if definition can prove what is the essential nature of a thing, can it also prove that it exists? And how will it prove them both by the same process, since definition exhibits one single thing and demonstration another single thing, and what human nature is and the fact that man exists are not the same thing?)

As we see, Aristotle did not speak directly of nature or of existence, but he said that it is one thing to ask what is the nature of humanity (τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος) and something else to ask whether human beings exist (τὸ εἶναι ἄνθρωπον). It does not follow from this that the difference between the questions indicate any difference between essence and existence understood as elements of being, since such an interpretation would definitely be going too far. It is even doubtful that, in the second case, it is a question of existence at all. The entire problem appears in the context of demonstration, not in the context of strictly metaphysical analyses (they are after all the *Posterior Analytics*, a work on the boundary between logic and methodology). Why does Aristotle distinguish between the two questions? On the basis of the examples he provides, the matter becomes clear: It is not a question of metaphysics here. Aristotle is distinguishing between the two questions because sometimes we can know that something is, or more precisely, that something takes place, something happens, for example, an eclipse of the moon is occurring, and then we try in addition to investigate why the eclipse is taking place. We can see the eclipse, but we do not know and do not ask why it is, but we only behold it. One question concerns the fact that it is, and the other concerns why it is. In both cases it is the order of content, not the order of existence as existence.

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12   Ibid.
13   Aristot., *An. Post.* II, 7, 92b 8–12.

Aristotle, as Owens rightly notes, does not ponder whether existence is contingently connected with a thing (to speak in the language of Thomas), but is concerned with:

> the universal and necessary connection between the elements of definition and demonstration. A *per accidens* connection is not sufficient to answer the question 'whether-this-is.' If the connection between elements is impossible, as in the case of a centaur or a goat-deer, we have a non-being.[14]

There is no necessary connection between the concepts of a goat and a deer, and therefore, we answer, 'no, it is not' to the question, 'is it?' The entire time, Aristotle has in mind the context of scientific knowledge, not the investigation of accidental connections of concepts or of contingent events. Owens continues:

> The answer to the question 'is it?' is negative. However, when the answer is affirmative, then 'what is it?' is directly evident in the case of indemonstrable things. If the answer is affirmative, but 'what-it-is' is not immediately evident, we have something that needs to be demonstrated.... Hence 'is it?' is the question 'is it a being?'[15]

When he says 'being,' he means that there is a necessary relation between the one and the other concept. Owens explains:

> 'what is it?' investigates further the nature or substance of the being. When one arrives at the proper specific difference by the process of demonstration, it is connected with the genus in order to present the particular (specific) knowledge needed for a full answer to the question 'what is it?' In accordance with this knowledge, 'is it?' is quasi-generic knowledge about the thing sufficient to describe the thing as a being. However, 'what is it?' is particular (specific) knowledge acquired by the addition of the specific difference.[16]

Thus, the answer to the question 'is it?' concerns the identification of something not so much at the existential level as at the generic level. It is a question

14   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 291.
15   Ibid.
16   Ibid., 292.

of the genus that is part of the definition in the classical sense. To reach the species, we must find the specific difference, and only then can we know both *whether* something is and *what* it is.

Questions of this sort appear both at the level of the sensory knowledge of the world and in mathematical knowledge. It is a matter of the connection between the subject and the predicate, in which the predicate can indicate the genus or the specific difference. The first refers to the question 'is something?' and second refers to the question 'what is it?' Only knowledge of the specific difference allows us to single out one species from another within their common genus. The question 'is something?' directs the attention of the questioner not to the existential side of being regardless of what kind of being it is, but to the being described inside the definition, that is, within the essence composed of a genus and a specific difference.

Existence does not appear in Aristotle's philosophy as a separate element or even an aspect of being; but it is inscribed within the context of the analysis of substance-essence and of the definition that corresponds to substance-essence in the order of knowledge. The definition expresses the essence, which in the case of composite beings, and especially material beings, has two elements. As we see, Aristotle did not consider the existential aspect of being at all, and everything is played out at the level of essence and properties.[17]

What Did Al-Farabi Discover?

Al-Farabi was the first to speak of the new element, existence. His contribution from a historical perspective was that existence, which as *esse* (*einai*) had been shown only as an aspect of essence or substance, was differentiated from substance and from essence. What does it mean to be differentiated?

Al-Farabi believed that Aristotle knew the difference between essence and existence, and his belief was based not on the *Posterior Analytics* mentioned above or on the *Metaphysics*, but on a short earlier work, the *Categories*. The result was that the problem of the difference between essence and existence was presented in a special light, not to show the priority of existence or to recognize the difference between essence and existence as a real difference,

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17 For this reason, Enrico Berti's statement seems strange, that the plurality "of the meanings of the verb 'to be' was Aristotle's original and ingenious discovery"; *Wprowadzenie do metafizyki* [Introduction to Metaphysics], trans. Danilo Facca (Warsaw: Wydaw. Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 2002), 62. Aristotle was certainly ingenious, but the existential aspect of being was not his discovery.

for which metaphysics would be most qualified, but a logical and semantic context, because that was the aspect of Aristotle's arguments in the *Categories*.

Why did Al-Farabi look to the *Categories*? As we remember, the work was an inseparable element of the introduction to philosophy wherever philosophy was cultivated. It was regarded as the foundation in the process of philosophical education. On the other hand, we must also remember that in the teaching of philosophy, Porphyry's *Isagoge* preceded Aristotle's *Categories*, and so, Aristotle's short work was read from a Neoplatonic perspective, and not from the perspective of Aristotle's metaphysics. Al-Farabi was primarily influenced by Neoplatonism and the Neoplatonic conception of being.

The *Categories*, as a work in the theory of language, contains a series of references that belong both to the theory of knowledge and to the theory of reality. In the *Categories*, the concept of substance appears, which is crucial for language, knowledge, and reality. The concept of substance would be analyzed later in detail in the *Metaphysics* (because the *Categories* was written earlier). The problem is that in the *Categories*, Aristotle speaks of substance and distinguishes between two types of substance: first substance (also called primary substance) and second substance (also called secondary substance). Although Aristotle never returned to that distinction in any other work, including the *Metaphysics*, later commentators and historians received that distinction as a constant element of Aristotle's philosophical system—but that was a mistake. Second, substance appears only in the *Categories*, and so it appeared before Aristotle analyzed substance in depth in the *Metaphysics*.

What did Aristotle write in the *Categories*? He wrote that first substance, "in the strictest, most primary, and highest degree is that which cannot be predicated of a subject, nor can it be found in a subject, for example a particular human being or a particular horse."[18] Thus, a concrete individual being and subject is a first substance. A property that is not a subject but belongs to a subject is not a first substance; for example, a color is a color of something to which it belongs. What, then, is second substance?

Aristotle explains:

> But in a secondary sense those things are called substances within which, as species, the primary substances are included … For instance, the individual man is included in the species 'man,' and the genus to which the species belongs is 'animal'; these, therefore—that is to say, the species 'man' and the genus 'animal'—are termed secondary substances."[19]

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18   Aristot., *Cat.* 2a.

19   Ibid. This Edghill translation is taken found in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*.

Therefore, second substances are universals that can be predicated of first substances as of individuals. If we hold precisely to the definition of first substance, that a first substance is a subject, then second substances are not subjects since they are predicated of subjects. What are they?

The *Categories* was not a strictly metaphysical work, but concerned inquiries in the philosophy of language (*kategorein* means to predicate). In connection with this, Aristotle did not go in depth into what the ontological status of the second substances was. He started from the practice of ordinary language and saw the difference between the subject and predicate when certain subjects could not be predicated of a predicate—it is a concrete subject—or, in turn, the same predicate cannot be predicated of many subjects. Sometimes, a predicate of that sort belongs to a category other than first substance, because something is added to the substance (Socrates is white), and sometimes it is located precisely in the category of substance because it indicates what the substance is (Socrates is a man). However, a predicate as a predicate is not a subject. Consequently, Aristotle was inclined to connect second substance not only with substance, but also with the category of quality. As a result, the ontological status of second substance was weakened, because it was not something in itself (a subject), and so in a strict sense it was not a substance.[20] From the point of view of being, the second substance was not a substance-subject, but a quality.

Meanwhile, Al-Farabi altered Aristotle's position. He treated second substance not as a quality but as a pure essence. In this way, he strengthened the ontological status of second substance, which was not a quality but remained a substance (because, after all, essence is already an ontological aspect of substance). It did not hinder Al-Farabi that his conception of the second substance was not the same as first substance, this something (*huwiya*), which Aristotle called '*tóde ti*' (this here). It was important that second substance was something more than quality, which as a category of being belongs to the accidents, while essence is located on the side of substance and form, and moreover it was freed from matter, which is a part of substance when substance is understood as the subject.[21]

It was at this point that existence appeared. Al-Farabi encountered the problem of existence when he was considering essence as second substance. The point was that if second substance was pure essence, then the problem of the connection of second substance with existence had to be resolved. Why? Here, Al-Farabi went to the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle said, as we have

20   Ibid.
21   Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, 132.

mentioned, that first substance is only what is real, since names that concern unreal things have no essence (they do not refer to substance), and, at most, they can only have a meaning.[22] Al-Farabi agreed with Aristotle, but he faced the following problem: in the case of an essence predicated of a substance, that essence, if it is an essence, implies the existence that a first substance has. Therefore, there must be a difference between essence and existence. If there were no such difference, then to think of the essence of humanity would be to think of human beings as existing; but that is not so. In that case, Al-Farabi concludes, existence is different from essence and is not a derivative of essence (as a property of essence).[23]

That problem, analyzed from the point of view of the difference between first substance and second substance, revealed to Al-Farabi a difficulty that bore fruit in the discovery of existence as an element of being different from essence. This problem appeared merely in the context of Aristotle, because the distinction between first substance and second substance was from Aristotle.

A question arises: why did Aristotle not see this problem? It was because the distinction between first and second substance appeared in a short work that was not investigating the structure of being, and especially not investigating the structure of substance, but only the categories of being. Hence, when the difficulty concerning second substance arose, it was connected with quality and not with essence. Essence qua essence, and so as an element of being, did not appear until the *Metaphysics*, one of Aristotle's later works, and there it is precisely analyzed. In the *Categories*, second substance as a quality did not lead to the question of the status of its existence, since it simply had being in a subject-substance, since as a quality, it belonged in terms of being to the accidents.

In the *Categories*, Aristotle used the word 'ουσία' (ousía) both with respect to the concrete thing and to the generality. In the *Metaphysics*, the term 'second substance' did not appear at all, and the universal was rejected outright as a pretender to being substance.[24] The search for an answer to the question of what substance is led to essence, but to essence as second substance. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle tried to avoid identifying essence ('τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι', *to ti ên einai*) with the universal (*on kathólou*). By restricting substance to the concrete thing (*tóde ti*) and by requiring that essence (*to ti ên einai*) remain in connection with the concrete thing, Aristotle sought to avoid Platonism.

22   Aristotle, *An. Post.* 92b 3; Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 132.

23   Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, 132.

24   Aristot., *Met.* 1038b–1039b 20.

Platonism excessively identified being with an idea or concept. Therefore, the problem of existence did not appear in Aristotle as it did for Al-Farabi.

As we keep in mind the broader background, of course we should remember the Greek image of the world and conception of science. Aristotle's world was eternal, and so substance-essence was also eternal. Hence, the existence of substance-essence was not a problem, since science was not concerned with things that came into being and perished, which would have directed the philosopher's attention to the problem of existence. Here, we have the basic reason why existence qua existence eluded the attention of the ancient Greek. For philosophy, the problem was that of change versus constancy and eternity versus impermanence, but never how anything started to exist.

Finally, the problem of existence was seen in its dramaturgy for the first time when not only the world, but the entire universe, appeared as contingent, which is situated in the field of the image of reality as created. For the Greeks, the concept of creation, and so the rise of something from nothing, was logically unacceptable. How could being arise from non-being?[25]

On the other hand, when the idea of creation appeared in Christian and Arabic culture because of the Bible, a revealed text, then in turn, philosophers faced the next dilemma. Contingency as non-necessity was not to be found in the field of science because science was searching for what was necessary and constant. Contingency is a contradiction of necessity and constancy. In this way, existence could not have appeared in Aristotle's field of vision, nor could it have appeared in the history of philosophy as long as the Aristotelian conception of science presented in the *Posterior Analytics* was accepted.

Nevertheless, the problem of existence finally arose for Aristotle's commentators. It appeared as a scientific and philosophical problem, not as a purely religious problem outside of science. This had to lead to a serious rupture in the image of the world and the conception of science, although it was a process and not a sudden break. The new image of the world had to mature to the point where it could be accepted in philosophy.

Al-Farabi thus singled out essence as second substance and faced the problem of the connection of essence with existence. It had to be a problem, since without existence, according to what Aristotle had said, essence as a correlate of a name would only be a meaning but would not be a true essence. A true essence refers to a being, and therefore, it cannot remain a quality or a name that

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25   This principle is expressed in Latin as if inscribed in stone: "*nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus umquam*" (nothing is ever gotten out of nothing by divine power); Lucretius, *De Rerum natura, liber I, v. 150* [On the Nature of the Universe, Book I, Verse 150] (Paris: In aedibus Rovillii, 1565), I, 150.

merely possesses a meaning. This connection cannot be necessary because then the very thought of an essence (a concept) would entail the existence of a thing. In that case existence must be different from essence. Existence must be a new element that also does not come from essence, because if it did come from essence it would be necessary just as essence is necessary.

At that point, a problem arises. Where does essence come from? This was not a problem for Aristotle in the sense that an essence was in itself eternal, although it was connected with mutable matter (for example, in the cycle of birth). But for Al-Farabi it was a problem because he faced a different picture of the world.

What was the reason from which essence came? It would be the same cause in which essence and existence are identical. In this way, Al-Farabi appealed to a new conception of God unknown to the Greeks and Romans. God is the being in whom essence and existence are identical. What is essence in other beings, if essence is not existence? Al-Farabi answered that essence in other cases is only something possible, or as existent it is something destructible.[26]

Because of the discovery of existence, essence was divided from existence in such a way that essence alone became the object of analysis. With that as a given then, that essence could not be real, because it would have to have existence by necessity. If it could not be real, it would have to be possible. To emphasize the role of existence for the concrete being, Avicenna said that essences in themselves are more oriented to non-being than to being, but essence in itself is something, because it is what is possible.[27] So, at the price of introducing existence, there was a rupture in metaphysics, because essence, although possible, was no longer merely the meaning of a name but it was an essence.

What, then, was existence? Al-Farabi, and Avicenna following him, located existence not in the order of essence, because then it would be necessary, but in the order of accidents. Existence is not necessary, and accidents, in particular, are not necessary. Considering what is typical of accidents (non-necessity), they connected existence with the accidents. Of course, existence is not simply the next category. Al-Farabi and Avicenna thought that existence was an accident of another type than the other nine categories mentioned by Aristotle. Nevertheless existence was reduced to the order of accidents.[28]

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26   Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'apres Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*), 133–134.

27   Ibid., 136.

28   Gilson remarked that the reason existence became an accident was of a religious nature: "It is ... Avicenna, whose view that existence is not an accident of essence, who was shaped under the influence of the religious concept of the act of creation, who was criticized strongly by Averroes"; Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, 124). As we see, this was influenced

In summary, both Arabic philosophers noticed that concrete being as 'this something' must contain existence, which is different from the essence of a being. They also noticed that such existence is not possessed by an essence understood as a second substance, as a concept, or as a possibility, which according to Avicenna, is closer to non-being than to being, and that it is first the beginning of the action of the first and only cause, which is God, in whom there is no division into existence and essence, which makes it into this concrete thing. From the metaphysical point of view, existence was counted among the accidents, but the role of existence in the constitution of the concrete being was appreciated. In this context two important questions arise. Is existence really a kind of accident? Does existence concern only a real concrete thing?

Existence as the Act of Being—Thomas Aquinas

Thomas joined the discussion connected with the first question. Aquinas remarked that existence makes the entire substance or entire concrete being real, and so, existence cannot be a mere accident, because an accident is something added to a really existing substance and does not encompass the substance in its entirety. Thomas opposed the position of the Arabic philosophers and said directly, "the existence of a thing is different from its essence, but this should not be understood as if it were something added in the manner of an accident, but as constitutive in the way that the principles of essence are constitutive."[29]

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more by philosophical reasons connected with the reception and interpretation of Aristotle's views.

29   "*Esse enim rei quamvis sit aliud ab eius essentia, non tamen est intelligendum quod sit aliquod superadditum ad modum accidentis, sed quasi constituitur per principia essentiae. Et ideo hoc nomen Ens quod imponitur ab ipso esse, significat idem cum nomine quod imponitur ab ipsa essentia*" (For even though a thing's existence is other than its essence, it should not be understood to be something added to its essence after the manner of an accident, but something established, as it were, by the principles of the essence. Hence the term being [ens], which is applied to a thing by reason of its very existence, designates the same thing as the term which is applied to it by reason of its essence), translation from Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, bk. 4, lect. 2, no. 558, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 204; Thomas Aquinas. *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* [Exposition of Twelve Books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*], eds. M.R. Cavala and Raimondo M. Spiazzi (Taurini: Marietti, 1964), bk. 4, lect. 2, no. 558; "*cum nihil sit essentialius rei quam suum esse*" (nothing is more essential to a thing than its existence); Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, I, d. 8, q. 3, art. 3, exp.; Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas on the Existence of God: Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, ed. James R. Catan

Existence is thus a principle of being, and not a property like an accident; existence completes essence and is the act for essence. Because of existence, we are dealing with a real being, and because of existence, an essence is an essence, that is, it belongs to the real order and not the possible order. An essence is a real essence, that is, a realized essence, due to existence.

In what way could an existence that was merely an accident make an essence real? Accident is another category of being other than essence, and even if existence were a special accident, it would always remain an accident. Meanwhile, the existence of a real being must be compatible at the level of substance, because the whole substance is real. Existence as an accident does not make substance real. Substance is real due to existence. Existence must encompass the entire being, while accidents refer only some aspect of a being.

The Arabic philosophers included existence among the accidents because essence expressed the necessary aspect of being, while existence expressed the contingent aspect. It must be noted, however, that although contingency and accident are not the same, and the fact that the link between substance and accident or, between substance and existence, is not necessary, does not mean that existence is an accident. For this reason, the role that existence performs in being should be put on center stage. An accident does not actualize a substance. An accident does not cause a substance to become real, but this is caused by existence. The function of existence is different from the role of substance-form and from the role of accidents. Existence must encompass the entire substantial being if it is one being.

Thomas stated that the existence of a substance must be substantial and not accidental, because it is the existence of a substance, not the existence of an accident. Existence must be commensurate to that of which it is existence. Hence, when one speaks of the existence of a being, that must be existence proportional to the entire being, not to an accident. Therefore, existence must enter into the object of metaphysics, because without existence there would be no being, and metaphysics would become objectless if metaphysics is supposed to refer to real being.

(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 235n31.; "*esse est accidens, non quasi per accidens se habens, sed quasi actualitas cuiuslibet substantiae*" (existence is an accident, not as though related accidentally to a substance, but as the actuality of any substance); Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, quod. 11, q. 2, art. 1, ad 2; cf. Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses,* 290. Various aspects of Thomas's conception of existence in particular works are discussed in detail by Pierre Faucon de Boylesve in *Être et savoir.* [Being and Knowing] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1985), 11–23.

When existence is treated as an accident, then essence comes to center stage in the understanding of being, and essence becomes the main object of philosophy. Then questions crucial to metaphysics arise: Can such an object of metaphysics, an essence without real existence, be treated as real object? How can it be real if it has no existence?

Of course, the main reason why existence was treated as an accident was the non-necessary connection of existence with a concrete substance (first substance), because the concrete substance could be or not be, while essence is composed only of what is necessary. Since Aristotle's methodology was binding, and according to that methodology, the object of scientific knowledge should be necessary and constant, existence as non-necessary in the order of concrete substance had to fall outside the realm the science. As non-necessary, existence was also considered one of the accidents, because an accident is what belongs to a being in a non-necessary way. That was not a problem for Aristotle, because he did not single out existence as an element of being really different from essence-substance. As soon as existence appeared in the field of metaphysics, it became both a methodological and ontological problem. It was an ontological problem because, without existence, there would be no being, and it was a methodological problem, because it was a problem of including in science something that did not seem to meet the criteria of scientific knowledge.

Could the methodological criteria that Aristotle presented in the *Posterior Analytics* be applied to metaphysics, the status of which was completely different from that of the particular sciences? The question of necessity arises in the order of content, not in the order of existence, which Aristotle did not know and did not formally bring into the particular sciences, since in the particular sciences then or now existence as such does not enter into the scope of their object. Thomas had no concern for those methodological limitations and brought existence into metaphysics, because otherwise metaphysics would lose its reason for being, that is, its object, which is real being.

The difference between the position of Al-Farabi and Avicenna and the position of Thomas was that the Arabic philosophers did not see clearly enough the difference between the essential order (the content of being) and the existential order (the existence of being). They regarded existence as an accident, because it was not a constitutive element of essence and was connected with essence in a non-necessary way. If essence expresses the content-related aspect of being, then existence, since it is not content, cannot constitute essence qua essence; that is, existence cannot determine the content-related (essential) aspect of being. However, it is a question of real being, which is an integral whole. Essence as a real part of being must be under real existence that does

not come to it in the manner of an accident. In what relation does it stand? Here, Thomas gives a new answer: existence is the act for essence. Essence is only real when it is found under actual existence. Although the connection of essence with existence in contingent beings is non-necessary, if it is present, it has the state of a relation of potency (essence) to act (existence). It is a non-necessary connection (a being can lose reality, that is, it can cease to exist), but it is a constitutive connection without which there would be no connection of being at all, and so, there would be no necessary essence.

On the one hand, existence is contingent and so it is non-necessary. On the other hand, it is necessary if a being will be a being, that is, if it will be something real. Here, a new understanding of necessity appears, and it is an essential understanding for the object of metaphysics if the object of metaphysics will be a real being. This new understanding concerns the necessity of possessing real existence in order to be a real being. This does not mean that a being possesses such existence by necessity. We must make a distinction between necessity of possession and possession by necessity. No contingent being possesses existence by necessity, but it is necessary for the being to possess existence if it is a being. This second type of possession means that existence can be lost, because that is what the word 'contingency' means.

According to Thomas, existence is an act proportional to the category of being for which it is an act. The existence of substance is the act for substance, and the existence of accidents is act for accidents. Just as in the order of particular beings each being has its own existence that is unique and unrepeatable, so in every concrete thing there are many acts of existence proportional to each category of being. Similarly, just as accidents have their subject in substance, so also, although accidents have their own existence, that existence is dependent on substance (*cuius esse est inesse*).[30]

For the first time, in the philosophy of Thomas, existence was seen from a metaphysical perspective that, on the one hand, allowed one to confirm its role in the constitution of real being, and on the other hand, allowed one to interpret the difference between existence and essence, the difference between the existential and the essential order. This was very important for philosophy, because for the first time in history, someone succeeded in singling out the existential aspect of being in philosophy in such a way that existence was not only recognized as an element of being, but that element was different from essence. Prior to that point, philosophy had gravitated toward essence without seeing existence or marginalizing existence, whether in its ontological role

30   See note 4 above; 5:48.

(reduction to accidents) or its epistemic role (existence brought nothing to the known object).

The difference between essence and existence was peculiar, because it was not a difference of the sort that took place between two things. It was a difference within being and only within being, which means that existence could not really be separated from the whole of a being in the way that we can separate a material fragment from a whole, such as when we break a branch from a tree. Thomas put greater emphasis on how existence and essence compose one being than on how existence and essence differ.[31] This was not because they are the same, but because the difference could not be reified. Existence, and not essence, is the most important act of being.

Here the difference, not only between Thomas's position and that of the Arabic philosophy, but also in a particular way between Thomas and Scotus, is clearly delineated.

It turned out that Scotus would later play a key role in the marginalization of existence in metaphysical knowledge, and Scotus most strongly influenced the rise of future ontology. Like the Arabs, Scotus undermined existence for methodological reasons, and he marginalized existence for metaphysical reasons.[32]

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31 Gilson remarked that the Giles of Rome had later expounded on the real difference between essence and existence. This, in turn, made it easier for the followers of Scotus to criticize this difference, and consequently, easier to criticize the exceptional status of existence; cf. Raúl Echauri, *El pensamiento de Étienne Gilson*, 126–127, 141. In fact, Giles of Rome expounded on the real difference between existence and essence when he wanted to show that only God is his own existence, and all other things are composed of really different essences. It is important where the emphasis falls. Giles of Rome spoke of a real difference because he wanted to emphasize that an essence could be unconnected with its existence, and for this reason, essence must really differ from existence; *Theorems on Existence and Essence*, XII. This concerned essence, but we cannot perform the same procedure on existence, in order to look at existence as something independent of essence, as a thing. For this reason also, Giles of Rome made criticism easy for those would reduced the difference between existence and essence only to a mental difference or to a modality of essence.

32 "When he treated metaphysics as a science, Scotus applied to it the requirements posed by the Aristotelian theory of science (that is, a science must meet the following conditions: it must concern a certain, necessary, evident, or syllogistically derived truth). Hence, if metaphysics is to be a science, it cannot concern itself with the actual existence of things, since that is always a contingent existence, and contingent things cannot be object of science. Therefore, metaphysics apprehends being in its essence, while leaving aside actual existence"—this is how Edward Iwo Zieliński presents Ludger Honnefelder's views on Scotus's position on the place of existence in the determination of the object of metaphysics; cf. *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 49).

Existence as a Mode of Essence—Duns Scotus

Scotus thought that existence was neither an accident, as the Arabs said, nor an act, as Thomas thought. Between existence and essence, there was no real difference.[33] Existence was only a special modality of essence. The new word 'modality' changes the perspective from which essence was understood.[34] Most importantly, it subordinated existence to essence. Since the act, in the light of Aristotelian philosophy, was the most important element (or state) of a being, as soon as existence was no longer treated as an act, the center of gravity was shifted to essence, and thereby, we would be dealing with a return of the essentialism that Plato started and which Aristotle tried to overcome, albeit ineffectively. The Arabic philosophers also could not get past essentialism and they reduced existence, which they discovered, to an accident. Existence understood as a modality of essence also had to remain in the shadow of essence, as it were, and thereby, it did not essentially influence the conception of being as the object of metaphysics. Essence was more perfect than existence.

Although both Thomas and Scotus spoke of existence, there was a radical difference between them concerning existence as act and existence as modality. Here, we are dealing with completely different conceptions of being and metaphysics. Unlike pre-existential metaphysics, existence no longer slipped out of the field of vision of philosophers. Existence was present in their arguments. How? Herein lies the problem. There was no simple return to Plato or Aristotle, who did not formally single out existence or contrast it with essence.

According to Scotus, existence was not an essential predicate that would add anything to essence. Existence was a special mode (*modus*) that intensified being. Because of existence, being is opposed to nothingness. There are various modes (*modi*). Pure mental being is opposed to nothingness in one way, and extra-mental being is opposed to nothingness in another way.[35] Existence was thus the mode of the intensification of essence, but existence was not a concept which as a predicate would reveal the content of an essence. From the point of view of the content that an essence possesses, here existence

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33   "*simpliciter falsum est quod esse sit aliud ab essentia*" (it is simply false that existence is something other than the essence); Scotus. *Opus Oxoniense*, IV, d. 13, q. 1, 38; cf. Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vols. 8–9, 132.

34   "*essentia et eius existentia in creaturis se habent sicut quidditas et modus, ideo distinguuntur*" (essence and its existence in creatures are like essence and mode, that is why they are distinguished);Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* [Oxford Opus], I, d. 2, q. 2; cf. Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 5, 132.

35   Luigi Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto metafisico e teologo.* [John Duns Scotus, Metaphysician and Theologian] (Rome: Miscellanea Francescana, 1999), 74–76.

brought in nothing. Scotus looked at the problem of existence from the point of view of essence, not from the point of view of being qua being.

Although there were various degrees of intensity of essence that were arranged in a certain hierarchy, existence could not be distinguished from essence. Existence referred to the intensity and perfection that a being could possess. The concept of the 'intensity of perfection' was a fundamental principle of Scotus's philosophy. Each being possesses the perfection proper to it. When the intensity increased, the existence increased. Essence had priority in being. Possibility in God, considering that in God was the highest intensity because God was the infinite being, was the necessity of existence. Other essences as finite were only possible and did not require actuality or existence.

Before creation, existence and essence are nothing, and after creation, they are the same (*esse est idem realiter cum essentia*): existence is a mode of essence, the internal measure of the ontological intensity of the essential being, and it really does not differ from essence.[36] Thus, for Scotus being was essence, and existence was a modality of essence, although inseparable from it. Such a conception of being opened the way for a demonstration of God's existence. That proof was later de facto called ontological because here it was a legitimized passage from essence to existence.[37] At the same time there was a tendency to treat the possible as the real, not through an appeal to reality but negatively through contrast with nothingness. If possibility is not nothingness, then it is something real. That which is not nothing, is real.[38] That type of argument would later be typical of ontology.

Scotus agreed with Al-Farabi and Avicenna that since existence in things was contingent, existence could not be the object of metaphysics. Being is that object in a nominative sense. What does that mean? The next new word beside 'modality' appears here, which we do not find in Aristotle's philosophy, and that word is of key importance. According to Scotus, being in the nominative sense was the subject-essence understood as a system of necessary features. Being as thus understood perfectly met the criteria for scientific knowledge set by Aristotle. However, existence did not meet those criteria, because existence

36 Mauricio Beuchot, "Escoto y Ockham, negadores de la distinción real esencia-existencia. La lucha entre el escotista Trombetta y el tomista Cayetano" [Scotus and Ockham, Those Who Negated the Real Distinction between Essence and Existence: The Battle between Scotist Trombetta and a Thomist Cayetan], *Cuadernos salmantinos de filosofía* 22 (1995):175–176. Following Scotus, William Ockham also held that there was no real difference between essence and existence.

37 Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto metafisico e teologo*, 75–76.

38 Cf. Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 480–482; Honnefelder, *Scientia transcendens*, 140–141.

was not a feature and was not necessary. In that case, being as the subject of the existence of that which could exist was the object of metaphysics as a science. Consequently, real being could not be the object of metaphysics, but it was enough if it were possible being. Such are the results of the reduction of existence to a modality of essence. Possible being was the object of metaphysics.[39]

A peculiar paradox arose. Since the effects of the discovery of existence in being led to results opposite to those that could have been expected at the beginning, instead of bringing the conception of being closer to reality, they placed the conception of being at a greater distance from reality. Aristotle, who did not recognize the role of existence in being, made it clear that there was no being without an act, that potency became a being due to an act, and that possibility is not only not an act but it is also not potency. Here, the possible became the object of metaphysics. Would philosophy retreat? After all, wonder about the real world and an attempt to explain why reality was real were the original motives for the rise of philosophy. The answers may have been different and not always realistic, but the main motive of knowledge was the same. Reality was marginalized in favor of possibility.

It is hard to imagine a greater metaphysical gap than the one between the philosophy of Thomas and the philosophy of Scotus. For Thomas, the object of metaphysics was being as really existing, a being whose essence was under a commensurate actual existence. For Scotus, it was possible being, which indeed could also be real, but that was of no greater importance for metaphysics. The analysis of possible being was most important for metaphysics.

How did Thomas work his way out of the dilemma of Aristotelian methodology, which did not allow what was non-necessary to be an object of science?

From the metaphysical point of view, we should distinguish between two kinds of necessity, namely, absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity. Absolute necessity refers only to a being that exists by necessity, while hypothetical necessity occurs in contingent being: a being is a being insofar as it has actual existence, but that does not mean that the being must be. Without existence

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39   "For this reason, metaphysics, in its desire to be scientific knowledge, must consider being in its nominative sense; i.e., being as the subject of the existence of that which can exist"; so states A.B. Wolter as summarized in Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 35. As we can see, for the entire time, the reason for the elimination of metaphysics is to make an appeal to Aristotle's conception of science. This becomes a special a priori assumption when it does not consider the specific character of the object of knowledge, which is different from the object for which Aristotle developed his methodology. Also, the Scotist conception of existence differs fundamentally from Thomas's conception.

there is no being at all, and thereby there is no essence as a being. If something is a being, then it is necessary for it possess existence. This does not mean that something possesses existence by necessity. For it is one thing to exist by necessity, and quite another thing to possess existence—without which a being is not a being.

Essence and existence are two complementary elements of being that cannot be treated as ontologically independent (they cannot be reified). It does not follow from this that the connection between them is necessary with respect to constancy, because existence can be lost, and with it, essence as an element of being also falls. The Aristotelian criteria for scientific knowledge were applied to another conception of being (being based on form) and to another image of the world (the eternity of species). They were formulated for the particular sciences, where we work with univocal concepts and syllogisms. Meanwhile, in metaphysics, a new understanding and a new image of the world appeared, to which a new methodology had to be adapted. That world was scientifically knowable, although not in the same way as in the particular sciences. Necessity is present here, but it is a different kind of necessity than what is in the order of the relations within essence.

Scotus had a different understanding of existence and the relation of existence to essence. Existence was a modality of essence, and the difference between essence and existence was not real but purely mental.[40] This meant the complete domination of essence in the conception of being. Since existence was not really different from essence, existence was not apprehended in a special existential judgment.[41]

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40   "Here, we can pose a fundamental question, whether Scotus understood being, in this
        conception of being, in a nominal sense (*ens ut nomen*) or in a participative sense (*ens ut
        participium*), in other words, whether the absolutely simple concept of being means essence of existence. The answer to this question can be ascertained indirectly. Barth starts
        from Scotus's assertion that the concept of being is absolute simple, and that between essence and existence there is only a mental difference. If this is so, then the concept of being can be absolutely simple only when it means only essence or only existence: if 'being' meant an existing essence, it would cease to be an absolutely simple concept"; Zieliński,
        Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota, 42. Here, we see clearly
        that the assumption of the absolute simplicity of the concept of being affects how being itself is understood, regardless of what sort of real being it is. For Aristotle and Thomas, this way of presenting the question was unacceptable, because knowledge is supposed to adapt to the object, and the object that is being is not absolutely simple, which does not mean that it is not a unity. Also, the alternative seems strange, because how can existence itself, which in addition cannot be conceptualized, be apprehended in a simple concept?
41   Saint-Maurice, "The Contemporary Significance of Duns Scotus' Philosophy," 359.

Scotus thought that being should be understood univocally. He also rejected Aristotle's analogy of attribution and Aquinas's analogy of proportionality. As a result, the concept of being became purely formal, and its content was only non-contradiction, because only non-contradiction could be universally predicated of every being. That purely formal and non-contradictory concept of being had to be deprived of existence.[42] If, with regard to metaphysical knowledge, we ask what being is, then according to Scotus, the answer will not mention existence. The concept of being was purely formal non-contradiction.

Existence was completely neutralized and was not necessary to make an essence real. An essence in itself possessed reality, but what was that reality? It was possibility. Mere possibility was already reality.

Here, in the philosophy of Scotus, the next source of the future ontology is seen. If there is no real difference between essence and existence, if existence is not compatible with essence, and if existence is not the act of essence, then an essence is a being as a possibility. In this way, the concept of being was shifted from the level of reality to the level of possibility. Because possibility is raised in this way, this means that possibility after its separation from the real, concrete things takes on its own reality. Therefore, Scotus says that an essence is something real. It is real because of its possibility, and a possibility is already a reality. It is a special reality, a purely systemic category, and it is not the reality that we have in mind when we know the world around us.

In that case, that which is possible and that which is real are both real. For the metaphysics of Scotus, the difference between what is real and what is possible is unimportant. If possibility is real, then it is necessary. Scotus moved around within the Aristotelian conception of science and said that we can study the possibility of the existence of existence in the most scientific way possible because possibility is something that is necessary. Possibility is necessarily possible. The concept of necessity was shifted from the real order to the order of possibility, and therefore, possibility could be an object of scientific knowledge.[43]

That was Scotus's great success, to take away the reality of the object of metaphysics, and other steps followed. If possibility is necessary, then there is no need to look to existence, which is non-necessary because it is contingent. In such an approach to the problem, we are clearly dealing with equivocation in how the word 'necessity' is understood. It is not about the necessity of possibility, but about the necessity of states of being.

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42   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 41–42.
43   Ibid., 59.

Scotus made a distinction between existence and essence, but he reduced that relation to an accidental relation as Avicenna had done.[44] Existence is not the act of essence, or in general the act of possibility. In the framework of possible being, essence is sufficient and existence is not needed, and if existence comes to an essence, then it is in an accidental way.

Scotus understood existence in an univocal way, which means that it is applied to all being in the same way.[45] This means that no being has its own unique existence. Meanwhile, Thomas clearly emphasized that existence cannot be generalized or universalized, because each being has only the existence that is proper to it.[46]

Possible being is foremost in Scotus's metaphysics. Being as something (a thing) different from non-being, and so as possible and non-contradictory, but not as existing, was the object of metaphysics. This leads us to ask, was that metaphysics, or was it ontology? If we look at Scotus's metaphysics from the perspective of ontology, which formally began only in the seventeenth century, we see clearly that ontology grew from Scotist sources. If that metaphysics-as-ontology differed essentially from the metaphysics of Thomas, then a question arises: why were both called by the one name of metaphysics?

Scotus's defenders would say that existence does play an important role in reality. Even if that were true, that is not the case in his metaphysics. There, it is a question of the place a particular author assigns to existence in his system, the conception of being that he works with, and what he regards as real. The blurring of the difference between what is real and what is possible is typical of ontology. Although the exposition of that difference is systemically strongest in the philosophy of Thomas, Aristotle had already remarked on it (the difference between essence and the meaning of a name, between potency and possibility), and to the measure of his system, he tried to explain it. As the result of the later discovery of existence by the Arabic philosophers, but also because of their wrong interpretation, essence was first made unreal, and then it was made more real than a concretely existing being. That was a sort of return to Platonism, except that now it was colored with a sort of creationism.

In Plato, the problem of a passage from the possible to the real did not yet appear. This was because from the outset the possible (a concept) was regarded as real by virtue of internal constitutive features. For Plato, reality was connected primarily with an essence or idea, the being of which was determined

44 Michel Bastit, *Les principes des choses en ontologie médiévale* [Principles of Things in Medieval Ontology] (Bordeaux: Editions Bière, 1997), 188.

45 Ibid., 189.

46 Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 382–388.

by a necessary arrangement or system of features. Essence as participated in by a material being was neither the object of science nor a true being. Material existence was not a measure of being. For Plato, it was rather a problem of a passage from the intentional order to the real order, not from possibility to reality. Aristotle, on the other hand, started from a material being in which the reality of essence could not be ontologically separated from the being, but could be separated only in the cognitive order by means of induction or abstraction. Here also at the level of knowledge, the definitions of essences that are in matter had to consider a relation to matter, even if matter was understood in general terms.[47] For that reason, Aristotle considered the differences between the real and the possible, since possibility appeared only at the level of the acts of our intellect; our intellect after it acquires cognitive contents from the world around us, and so real content, could perform further operations more loosely connected with reality, and those operations would open the field for artistic and mathematical creativity. Those operations were within the domain of possible being, the criterion of which was non-contradiction, but non-contradiction did not yet provide reality. Potency was necessary, and that was situated within real being and corresponded to matter.

In the case of Scotus, metaphysics was primarily epistemology, and so it was human knowledge of being. For such a metaphysics or ontology, the most important thing was essence, possible being, and non-contradiction, not being as that which exists. At the metaphysical level, there was no essential difference between real being and intentional being because they were both non-contradictory, and existence was accidental to them. The identification of metaphysics with epistemology led to the formalization of metaphysical problems, and so it led to the identification of metaphysics with logic. This is because the real and the logical were identified, and non-contradiction, or possibility, was the most important base of reality that was common to everything.[48] Scotus's metaphysics was a system of logic.

Scotus believed that essence was a condition for existence. We would first ask whether something has an essence (*an essentiam habet?*), and only later whether it exists (*an sit?*). Existence follows from essence and implies essence. Something is capable of existence because it has an essence. Even if a thing were absent, the intellect could make true judgments, when the judgment was in agreement with the intellect.

Scotus introduced various types of existence. On one occasion, he distinguished the existence of what actually exists (*esse quod est actualiter*), versus

47   Aristot., *Met.* 1035b 25–31.
48   Bastit, *Les principes des choses en ontologie médiévale*, 190.

the existence of what exists (*quod est existere*). On another occasion, a three-fold existence appeared: mental being (*ens rationis*), diminished being (*ens diminutum*), and intellectual being (*esse intellectum*).

Finally, we find the distinction with the most important consequences, between existence of essence (*esse essentiae*) and the existence of existence (*esse existentiae*). The point here is that we can understand the essence of a non-existent thing, that is, a thing that does not possess *esse existentiae*. If we can understand that essence, that it is somehow a being, it somehow is, and it is not nothingness. It is the existence of an essence as what can be thought, but not existence as really existing. It is *esse essentiae*. That procedure allowed Scotus to liberate essence cognitively from real existence, that is, from *esse existentiae*. Why would he do that?

The reason is that Scotus's metaphysics was only a fragment of his theology. Scotus was not primarily interested in being qua being, but in how God created the world, how essences exist in God, and how essences existed in God before they were created externally. Here, Scotus remarked that the Divine Intellect first created intelligible essences, something of which the human intellect was incapable. In both cases, *esse* was not *esse simpliciter* as the *actus ultimus* first received by substance and then by accidents. Our intellect creates *esse intelligibile* and not *esse simpliciter*, that is, our intellect does not produce the existence of substances. That is diminished existence (*esse diminutum*). It is diminished because it is found in the intellect. Homer in the intellect possesses the same content as living Homer, but the existence of the first is *secundum quid*, or relative.

Esse simpliciter is the existence of substance. However, if one speaks of being as the contradiction of non-being, then the first such contradiction is already mental being, which possesses *esse diminutum*. It also occurs in sacramental signs and in logical intentions, and it can be defined and be an object of science. *Ens rationis* is *ens diminutum* and belongs to *ens secundum quid*. The essences that are first constituted by the divine intellect do not yet have *esse simpliciter*, but are *ens ratum*. They do not possess logical being, but they possess metaphysical being, which consists in this: objectively they can come into existence, but they are not yet such as beings apart from the mind. *Esse firmum et verum* concerns both existence and essence. Essence possesses its own existence of essence, and a concrete being possesses the existence proper to its mode.

Scotus worked with a two-fold understanding of *esse*: as that which is contrary to non-being, and as the ultimate act (*actus ultimus*). Henry of Ghent remarked that an idea in God's mind possesses *esse essentiae*. Later, as having been created, the idea could receive *esse existentiae*. In this regard, Scotus

remarked that an idea has *esse secundum quid*; he also rejected any real difference between essence and existence. An idea possesses in itself complete being as an already determined metaphysical reality. Another subsequent act cannot be added. Individual existence is the ultimate individuating form, but from the point of view of existence as such it is an accident. We find ourselves in an infinite world of forms.

Earlier, Henry of Ghent had spoken of the pre-existence of essences with regard to the problem of essences before creation. He thought that essences had some sort of existence proper to them (*res cui potest competere esse*). A similar argumentation was this: the impossible is pure nothingness, and the possible is pure being, but they are different degrees of being. The degrees of being were introduced where the point of view of essence was dominant and where existence was an immanent aspect of essence.

The subtle distinction between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae* allowed Scotus to ignore real existence, which as individual is merely an accident, and it allowed him to focus on essence, which also possessed its own existence. Basically, real (actual) existence brought nothing to the object of metaphysics.

Scotus did not look at the problem of existence from a purely metaphysical view, but rather from a theological-metaphysical point of view. For that reason, he appealed in this instance to ideas that God apprehends. It is certain that God's thought is subject to the law of the excluded middle, and in that case, the idea that God possesses cannot be contradictory. Still, for the existence of essence (*esse essentiae*) to appear, a special coordination of genus, species, and individual form is needed.

Such existence of essence is merely accidental. On the other hand, the existence of essence (*esse existentiae*) is a new perfection that encompasses substance and accidents.[49]

Suárez, the Heir of Scotus

Francisco Suárez sometimes followed Avicenna, sometimes followed Henry of Ghent, and sometimes followed Scotus. Like Henry, Suárez tried to define being independently of the existing of things apart from the intellect. Readiness for existence (*aptitudo ad existentiam*) was sufficient. In *Disputationes metaphysicae* (disp. 31), Suárez considered the problem of the status of *esse essentiae*. He ultimately identified it with *esse reale* and *esse obiectivum*.[50]

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49   Ibid., 193.
50   Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 182–186. This is the path that was set by
       Scotus; cf. Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 99).

Following Avicenna and Scotus, Suárez argued for his belief that the existence of essence is sufficient for the use of metaphysics; the existence of essence is not at all the existence we have in mind when we speak of something real, of a substance in itself that exists independently of our knowledge. It is enough if that essence, which is isolated from a real being (that is, a created being) is not nothing, and then it is already a being. It is the essence of created beings before those beings were created by God. Here, we see how strong was the influence of the inclusion of theology in metaphysics and epistemology. Theology helps to support the Platonic conception of ideas. Yet a metaphysician, who speculates on the ontological status of ideas in God's intellect before those ideas become real in the world, is not a metaphysician, but a theologian. The main point of reference here is not the real world that we know, but ideas or essences that we know indirectly on the basis of metaphysical-theological speculations. Suárez's metaphysics determined the status of the ideas also with respect to existence. They are not part of a whole or substance because substances appear only after creation, and they are also not nothingness. In such a case they must have their own existence. That existence is called '*esse essentiae.*' The problem with this is that the essence before creation was not only an object of divine knowledge, but also became the main object of metaphysical analyses.

That could lead to a distorted view of reality. The supposed object of divine creative knowledge becomes the actual object of human metaphysical knowledge. The result is that essence, isolated from substance and real being, receives its own existence, albeit a peculiar existence: *esse essentiae*. The problem with this is that Suárez describes existence as *esse reale* and *esse obiectivum*, real existence and objective existence. In this way, he appropriated the concepts of reality and objectivity for the idea or essence. This sort of theologically inspired metaphysics led to a rebirth of Platonism and to the rise of ontology.[51]

Esse essentiae had priority over the existence of the concrete created thing.[52] Existence as *existentia* is explained etymologically as *extra causas suas sistere* (stand outside its causes), *extra causas esse* (to be outside its causes), and so, to exist was to be outside causes. In that sense, creatures possessed existence

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51   Let us emphasize that the main reference point of *esse obiectivum* in Suárez's views is not human knowledge, but divine knowledge. It is knowledge of what God has created or can create. It becomes authoritative for both metaphysical and epistemological reflections; cf. Timothy J. Cronin, *Objective Being in Descartes and in Suárez*, 77. The problem is that the reactivation of ontology in the nineteenth and twentieth century would be based on just such a conception of the object of knowledge, but with God left to the side.

52   Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 187.

(*existentia*) only through the efficient cause and only when they were created. Essence as essence also possessed existence.

Suárez's conception of existence was strongly rooted in the Avicennian-Scotist current, and since the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* became the foundation for understanding philosophy in German scholastic metaphysics, it is not strange that that conception was included as something completely natural in the newly arisen ontology.

The Logical Transformation of Existence: Wolff

The new metaphysics, or ontology, almost completely marginalized existence, and existence was understood almost completely in terms of logic, but not in terms of metaphysics. This can be clearly seen in the example of the most influential ontology, Wolff's *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia* (First Philosophy, or Ontology). In almost a thousand paragraphs of this enormous work, only one short paragraph is devoted to existence (*existentia*), and the four that follow supplement it, but it is not an analysis of existence qua existence.

Before we look at how Wolff perceives existence, we should look at the context in which existence appears. It appears in the third chapter of the second section, which is entitled, *De notione entis* (On the concept of being).

In the first section, which is entitled, "De Principiis entis Philosophiae Primae" (On the principles of being of first philosophy), we have two chapters: "De Principio Contradictionis" (On the principle of contradiction), and "De Principio rationis sufficientis" (On the principle of sufficient reason). Then in the second section, which is entitled, "De Essentia et Existentia entis agnatisque nonnullis notionibus" (Some notions about the essence and existence of an entity and relations), the first chapter is "De Possibili et Impossibili" (On the possible and the impossible), the second chapter is "De Determinato et Indeterminato" (On the determined and undetermined), and the third is "De Notione Entis" (On the concept of being). Five paragraphs connected with existence appear in that last chapter at the very end.

As we can see, the problem of the role of existence in being is pushed to the back here. The principles are most important, but the most important principle, that principle of identity, is ignored. Those principles are formulated through being and show the domination of logic. The second section concerns the possible and impossible, and so, as it goes along, the author looks to the logical order, not to the real order. The distinction between the determined and the undetermined is a reference to the Scotist concept of being as a concept. When, at the very end, the problem of existence appears, it is preceded by

logic and semantic arguments as having priority for ontology. If what is known about being that does not actually exist is found in 173 paragraphs, then the last few paragraphs cannot bring in much.

What, then, is 'existence' for Wolff? For him, existence is the fulfillment or completion of possibility. The fulfillment of possibility is actuality. Is that a metaphysical definition? No, it is a nominal definition, and it comes from Aristotle's *Logic*.[53] As we see, possibility and not potency is the fundamental point of reference; hence, Wolff deals with existence in *Logic*, because possibility is primarily a logical category. On the other hand, existence is actuality (*actualitas*), which refers to possibility, because actuality is the fulfillment of possibility. Actuality is a logical category, not a metaphysical category.

The result of this logical transformation of a metaphysical problem was that Wolff identified actuality with act in reference to being. He wrote, "being that exists is called actual being or being in act."[54] Yet the fundamental reference of being must be this question. What does it mean that being is real, and not actual or in act? The concept of actuality is secondary to the concept of reality. Only in the context of the reality of being can we see the difference between act and actuality. Wolff belonged to the tradition in which reality (*realitas*) was connected with the thing (*res*), and the thing was connected with the essence (*essentia*). By that way, there is no passage to existence. Wolff explained, "whatever we understand as that which is or can be is called a thing, because it is something …, hence, reality and essence are for the scholastics synonyms."[55] For this reason, Wolff did not describe existence by reference to what we know as real and as evident, but existence as something at which we arrive through concepts, the most important of which is the concept of possibility. Existence is defined through possibility. Since existence is defined by possibility, it can only be actuality but not act, because actuality is the fulfillment of possibility, while act is the reason for the reality of the concrete being.

How can we arrive at the existence of a concrete being by a circuitous path, if the concrete being does not exist by necessity? How can we arrive at the existence of a concrete being if existence is not only the fulfillment

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53   "*Hic Existentiam definitio per complementum possibilitatis: quam definitionem nominalem esse patet*" (Definition of this existence is as a complement of possibility); Aristot., *Log.* §191; "Dicitur existentia etiam *Actualitas*" (It is called existence and also actuality); Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia* [First Philosophy, or Ontology], I, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 174.

54   "*Ens, quod existit, dicitur ens actuale, vel etiam ens actu*"; ibid., para. 175.

55   "*Quicquid est vel esse posse concipitur, dicitur Res, quatenus est aliquid.… Unde realitas et quidditas apud scholasticos synonyma sunt*" (Anything what is or can be conceived as possible to exist, is called a thing, so far as it is something… Hence, reality and essence are according to scholastics understood as synonyms); ibid., I, Sec. 3, cap. 2, para. 243.

of possibility, but is a new element in the structure of being? In what act of knowledge can we apprehend a concretely existing being, if a concept cannot help us, since a concept is not sensitive to existence? Meanwhile, for Wolff existence was enclosed in a concept, which was *actualitas* (actuality).

As Wolff approached what he understood by existence, in that paragraph, he looked to theology, cosmology, psychology, and physics, but he did not look to metaphysics (first philosophy) as a domain in which existence would have yet another meaning, the fundamental meaning to which deep analyses would be fittingly devoted. Nothing of the kind. In first philosophy, the definition drawn from logic was sufficient. Thus, de facto, he did not search for a metaphysics of existence, but was satisfied with a logic of existence, and that logic of existence was the foundation for ontology. In this way, Wolff laid the foundation for modern and contemporary ontology, in which existence would be some sort of modification of the thing or essence, and existence would be defined by reference to possibility as the actualization of the thing or essence. Existence would be neither an act of being really distinct from essence, nor an act apprehended in an existential judgment, because the legacy of scholastic philosophy would be dominated by a metaphysics filtered through Suárez, a metaphysics that looked to the metaphysics of Avicenna and Scotus, where existence was either an accident or a modification of essence. Hence, the main burden of ontological inquiries would not be connected with being qua being or with being as existing, since essence understood as essence, a thing, or an object would be put on center stage.[56] They would be the new objects of ontology, and ontology would no longer be metaphysics.

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56   To be sure, none of the contemporary philosophers, who, in their reflections, take up the question of the relation between essence and existence, consider existence as an act; instead, they view it as either a mode of essence or an accident. In this, we can see the indirect or direct influence of the Scotist tradition and Suárez. The discussion on the status of the difference between essence and existence is so difficult, because it is based on a one-sided or essentializing interpretation. This also applies to philosophers in whose systems existence is so strongly expounded upon, for example, in Heidegger's works. For him, existence means a way of being that is peculiar to human beings, and not the act of being. As Blanchette writes about Heidegger, "the old scholastic idea of a distinction between essence and existence does not seem to have entered his mind. In his elaboration on Kant's thesis, Heidegger emphasized 'that *existence* differs from *reality*,' and that reality's 'possible relation to existence or even the distinction between the two' had not been made a problem"; "Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology," 7.

Essence Instead of Being

The analysis of the status of possible being and the controversies over the role of existence in being constantly concerned something that seemed to be especially important for philosophy, for metaphysics, and for ontology, and which was called 'essence.' On the one hand, we have seen that Aristotle regarded only what was a component of a real being as essence, and only such an essence could be an object of definition in the strict sense. On the other hand, we could see how essence was gradually separated from that being to become an object of philosophy independent of its connection with a real being, and in this way, the road was prepared for ontology. Where did those differences come from? What is essence? What is the difference between essence in metaphysics and essence in ontology?

The Etymology of the Word 'Essence'

When we look at the Greek language, several words appear that have been translated as 'essence.' The starting point here is a question. We can raise many questions about reality—for example, 'of what quality?' (*poión*); 'how many?' (*posón*); 'where?' (*poú*)—and then we look for an answer that considers the quantitative, qualitative, or locational aspect. We could ask, 'what is it?' (*tí esti*), not to something general, but something concrete and particular; the question addresses *this* thing (*tóde ti*).[1] The last question, 'what is it?' inquires about the essence of the thing, not merely about quantity or quality. For example, when we ask what Socrates is like (*poión*), we may answer that he is wise (a quality of Socrates). When we ask how much Socrates weighs (*posón*), we may answer 80 kilograms (quantitative). But when we ask what or who Socrates is, we say, "he is a man." The last answer fits in the category of what Aristotle called 'essence.' Thus, essence is the aspect of a concrete being that we seek when we ask, 'what is it?' That approach is based both on common-sense knowledge and on the content of language, which in its resources makes it possible to ask such a question.

The problem of essence appeared not only in the context of inquiries concerning language, but also in inquiries about the basic categories of being,

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1 Aristot., *Met.* 7 1028a 11–13.

including the most important category, substance. Those inquiries were made primarily in book VII (Z) of the *Metaphysics*. To the philosophical question,'what is substance?' (*toutó esti tís he ousía*), Aristotle proposed four answers: the subject (*hupokeímenon*), genus (*genos*), generality or universal (*on kathólou*), and that whereby something was and is (*to ti ên einai*). Here, the point was to find an answer that would determine the primary meaning, not merely one of many meanings.

Aristotle eliminates, in turn, the meaning of substance as subject, because then prime matter would be substance, and prime matter was the foundation of change and indetermination. He then excluded the genus and the universal, because a substance should be a thing and not outside of it, but the universal is identical to an idea, and ideas are outside of things.[2] In that second case, Aristotle criticized the Platonic theory of ideas as a theory of substances or true being. The understanding of substance as *to ti ên einai* remained. This last conception seemed clear enough, but in translations, it has most often been expressed by the word essence (*essentia*, *Wesen*, etc.).

From a grammatical point of view, the genesis of the construction *to ti ên einai* is difficult to trace, especially when it has been treated as one whole expression.[3] '*Ti*' is the subject of predication of '*en*' and for the predicate in the infinitive form '*einai*,' and so, as a whole, the expression has the form of an answer to the question 'what is it?' The answer is: what (*ti*) was (*en*) being (*einai*). We should explain right away that the predication of '*en*' in Greek is a form in the past imperfect tense, an action that has not ended and extends to the present and even to the future. The Greek imperfect tense was even used for what was beyond time and eternal, such as the Platonic ideas and God.[4]

In another interpretation, *to ti ên einai* was a grammatical construction called the *dativus possessivus* (dative of possession), in which the infinitive verb '*einai*' indicates 'being' as that which is most important in what was and is. Therefore, it can refer only to the aspect of being that is unchanging.[5]

To summarize, in both cases, it is a question of something that endures, which is the same, does not change, and determines the identity of a being. Aristotle revealed that aspect when he was seeking an answer to the question

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2   Ibid., 1028b 33–1029a 35, 1031a 15–1032a 10.

3   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 180–188.

4   In this sense, it appears in the Gospel of St. John: "In the beginning was the Word" (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος; *En arché en ho lógos*) (John 1:1)—where God's creative power does not refer only to the past (which would be suggested by the past tense), but includes the present.

5   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 180–189.

'what is substance?,' and he remarked that substance is *to ti ên einai*, something whereby a thing was and is what it is.

Today, the word 'essence' no longer has such a powerful a reference to being as the Greek expression had, in which two grammatical forms of the verb connected with being appeared (*einai* and *en*). Instead, today the word essence indicates more some sort of necessary arrangement of contents, that which is most important, but without saying whether the contents are real or whether it is a question of a real being at all. Hence, if we want to make analyses in terms of history of philosophy, we have to look to the source of the meaning of essence to see what caused the meaning of the word to lose reality over time.

Knowledge of these etymological explanations that are connected with metaphysical analyses is essential to understand what source-meaning essence had in Aristotle's metaphysics. Essence was not a Platonic form that existed outside the world, nor was it an abstraction that was only a correlate of human thought. It was the internal element of being whereby the concrete individual being retained its identity.

Let us look more closely at the main line of Aristotle's arguments. When he made his analyses, on the one hand, he was trying to show what in being corresponded to substance, and on the other hand, he was trying to show what was suited for scientific knowledge. Apart from the investigation of the structure of being qua being, the search for an adequate object of scientific knowledge was a great challenge. The challenge was to show, against Plato's idealism and the sensualism of the Sophists, that the reality around us could be the object of scientific knowledge.

Aristotle discovered that the element that gave identity to being was form (*eídos*), and it was the internal component of being that determined a being to be one being despite complexity and change. The form was part of a composition with matter (prime matter) and with other accidents. Therefore, it might seem that the form was the substance, the essence (*to ti ên einai*) and the object of definition. The matter turned out to be more complicated.

Let us consider this precisely. Since it was a question of scientific knowledge, when Aristotle searched for an answer to the question 'what is substance?' he had in mind an object of scientific knowledge, and the object had to be expressed in the structure of a definition. Substance as *to ti ên einai* was not only form, but it was also form as that which could be defined. The two aspects contain within them the Aristotelian concept of essence. The first aspect referred to form as constitutive for the concrete being, and the second aspect referred

to form as part of a definition. Essence is form insofar as it is the object of apprehension in a definition.[6]

The question became more complicated for two reasons. First, it was easy for Plato, who held a position of dualism, to single out the form or idea, and the form or idea existed in isolation from matter. Aristotle, on the other hand, thought that a material being forms a composite unity and one could not separate form from matter without destroying the whole being. How, then, could the essence of a concrete being be defined if that essence in terms of being was a part of the whole being?

Aristotle thought that the definition of a thing whose form existed in matter must reflect the being. But in what way? Part of the definition, called the 'proximate genus,' was a reference to the matter, while the part contained the specific difference corresponded to the form. The definition of any species of animal, because an animal only exists in matter, had to contain the fact that the form of an animal was in matter. For this reason, the specific difference corresponded to the form in a definition; the definition as a whole did not refer to the form, but the proximate genus was matter taken in a general way.

The second problem concerned the individual occurrence of form in every being, and the generality of definition-based apprehensions. Here, in turn, Aristotle looked to his theory of act and potency and thought that generality was potentiality in the order of knowledge, which meant that the actual knowledge of essence is directed to the individual, while the content of that knowledge could potentially refer to other individuals that belong to the same species.[7]

To summarize, essence in Aristotle's philosophy appeared at the intersection of his theory of being, his theory of knowledge, and his theory of science, but the starting point was his theory of being. Unless we consider the theory of being, metaphysics, as the key for understanding essence, we lose the connection between essence and reality. That had consequences not only in philosophy, but also in the theory of science, which was based on definition, and that, without metaphysics, would lose the way to reality. Without metaphysics, the difference would be blurred between the reality that is investigated and a mental construct that contains necessary connections but with no definable counterpart in reality. Meanwhile, for Aristotle an essence had to be the essence of what was real.

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6   Krąpiec, Introduction to Aristotle, *Metafizyka 1*, lxviii–lxxi.

7   Aristot., *Met.* 1087a 15–21. "Actual knowledge and actual knowing are of a 'this' and not actually of a universal. Knowledge of the universal is only potential knowledge of the thing"; cf. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 428.

A question arises: What caused the conception of essence to evolve in such a way that it became the key concept for various ontologies in which the connection between essence and real being was regarded as secondary?

Essence in Itself—Al Farabi and Avicenna

The separation of essence from real being in the controversy between Aristotle and Plato consisted in the treatment of essence and content independently of the material, concrete thing. Essence, as it was spoken of in the Middle Ages, was different from Platonic form. Here, we are not dealing simply with a return to Platonism, since Aristotle's conception is taken into consideration, yet essence is separated from real being.

Avicenna played a key role in this. He was an expert in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but also knew the views of Al-Farabi on essence and existence. Although, as we have seen, both philosophers thought that Aristotle had made a distinction between essence and existence, they were the ones who began to speak of that difference in metaphysics, not solely in the *Analytics* as Aristotle had done, that is, in the theory and methodology of scientific knowledge.

Al Farabi used the Arabic word '*mahiya*' (*ma*—that which; *hiya*- is) for essence. The Arabic term also was recognized as corresponding to the Greek term '*to ti*' by Himsi and Al Kindi in the translation of Aristotle's *Theology*. Note, the term '*mahiya*' is not the same as Aristotelian essence because *mahiya* can mean essence in itself, which does not need to be made real in order to be an essence.[8] The Arabic language thus paved the way for philosophical essentialism, which Avicenna followed with complete consistency.

In what context did the problem of essence appear in Avicenna's thought? Although Avicenna considered the problem in his metaphysics, the way he presented the problem was not strictly metaphysical, since the emphasis fell on the way of predication, not on the way of being, and so the viewpoint of Aristotle's *Categories* was dominant over metaphysics.

The first chapter of the fifth treatise in the *Book of First Philosophy or Divine Science* had the title "Capitulum de rebus communibus et quomodo est esse earum," (concerning common things, or universals, and how they possess existence). Recall that, as earlier mentioned, Avicenna said that we may speak of a universal (*universale*) in three ways: First, we speak of a universal as what is actually predicated of many; for example, an individual human being is predicated of many human beings. Second, we speak of a universal as what can be

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8   Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, 31–32.

predicated of many; for example, the concept of a house with seven corners (*intentio domus heptangulae*) can be predicated of many houses, even though it is not necessary that the houses are many. Third, something can be called a general concept when nothing prevents it from being predicated of many, even though it is predicated of only one, as in the case of the earth and the sun. If we understand that the sun is and what the earth is, we cannot rule out that their concepts may be found in many things, unless someone were to show a reason why that would be impossible.

Avicenna says that the universal is what is found in the intellect and it is not impossible to predicate it of many things. Unlike the universal, the individual cannot be understood so as to be predicated of many things. The universal, because it is a universal, is something (*quiddam*), and since it is something to which universality pertains, it is something else. For this reason, because the universal is constituted as a universal, it is a predicate.

The definition of 'horseness' is outside the definition of universality, and universality is not contained in the definition of horseness. Horseness has a definition that does not require any reference to universality, but universality can happen to it. Hence, horseness is only horseness, and in itself it is neither a plurality nor is it singular; it does not exist in what is sensory, or in the soul, and it is not in things that are in potency or in act, because that would contained in the essence of horseness, but horseness is only horseness.

Unity is a property added to horseness, and unity makes horseness something that is one. Likewise in addition to this horseness possesses many other properties. Horseness, because plurality is found in its definition, is common, because it is accepted with designated properties and accidents, it is singular. Horseness in itself is only horseness.[9]

This crucial text showed for all future ontology in what way essence was led not only beyond the concrete existing being, but also beyond the intellect. It was led outside the concrete thing because the essence expressed in a definition is not limited to a concrete thing but can be predicated of many things. It was led outside the intellect because in itself, it does not need to be predicated of many things, and it does not need to be known. It is not in the Pleroma, not in God, and not in the human intellect.

This position is different from Platonism, Neoplatonism, or Aristotelianism. From it would come ontology as the science concerning essence. This is be-

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9   "*Equinitas ergo in se est equinitas tantum*" (Thus, in itself, horseness is just horseness); Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina, v–x* [Book of the First or Divine Science of Philosophy, 5–10] (Louvain: Peeters; Leiden: Brill, 1980), cap. 1, 42, 5: 229; cf. Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 101–102.

cause it is not a question here of concrete being or of universality, which appears on account of predicability. It is a question of the content of a universal as content, that, as content, possesses within it definite features. Avicenna was not interested in where the content came from or what the fundamental mode of the being of being was. He was interested in content qua content, considered in itself.

Here, we can see the difference between Aristotle and Avicenna, because for Aristotle, the main object and main problem of metaphysics was the question concerning being, not concerning content, since an isolated content was not a being. We can also see here the difference between Avicenna and Plato, because in Plato's philosophy, ideas appeared in the context of an attempt to understand the world. Avicenna was concerned with essence on account of its content, not on account of our knowledge of essence, the predication of essence, or the being of essence.

What were Avicenna's reasons for shifting the emphasis from being and concepts to essence? The main reason was of an epistemological nature, not of a metaphysical nature. The point was that essence in the greatest degree met the criteria of an object of scientific knowledge because it was exclusively an arrangement of necessary features. In such a situation, essence should be the object of science and of philosophy.

Because of this line of reasoning, the conception of science made possible a new separation of knowledge from real being, and in this way, destroyed Aristotle's intentions. Aristotle wanted to save the material world for scientific knowledge, and wanted this to such a degree that an essence separated from matter would cease to be an essence. For his part, Avicenna separated essence from being with no concern for Aristotle's reservations. The essence called the third nature, that is, a nature that was neither in things nor in the intellect, but was in itself, would be the most important thing for metaphysics.

Many philosophers would follow this path, including the most influential philosopher, Duns Scotus. Before that would happen, there would be another attempt to connect essence with real being.

Essence Reinstated to Reality—Thomas Aquinas

Thomas discussed the problem of the status of essence in *De ente et essentia* (On being and essence), a short but important work. This opusculum was written in the context of a discussion on the seventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in connection with the problem of defining what essence is in its relation to the concrete individual being and in relation to definitions. To present

clearly the connection of form with matter in material beings, Thomas often emphasized Aristotle's thought," the form alone cannot be called the essence of a composite substance."[10] Averroes, whom Aquinas cited, had also made the same observation.[11] The main point here was to refute Platonism based on the dualism of form and matter where it was too easy to understand form by itself with no relation to matter. This time, that relation, obviously in composite beings, had to be considered. Thus, as Thomas said, "essence contains the matter and the form."[12] What sort of matter was this? Thomas looked to the distinction between designed matter (*materia signata*) and undesigned matter (*materia non signata*).[13] In a definition that expresses essence is found undesignated matter, and thereby the definition has a general dimension, but it prevents us from a Platonic treatment of the essence of beings composed of matter and form.

The next distinction concerned the difference between 'man' (*homo*) and 'humanity' (*humanitas*). Man and humanity both describe the essence of man, but the term 'man' designates an essence as a whole (taking into consideration matter in a potential sense), and therefore, that term can be predicated of individuals that are actually in matter. The term 'humanity' designates the essence of man in a partial way since it leaves aside matter, and therefore, it cannot be predicated of individuals.[14]

These refinements are important because many layers are superimposed on each other here. There is the layer of language and meaning, but also the layer of being and the structure of being. Only by reference to the structure of being do knowledge as such and language as such show their incompleteness. At the level of language or its meanings, merely syntactic elements could easily be treated as things when a thing or being would correspond to every word. We

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10   "*Neque etiam forma tantum essentia substantiae compositae dici potest, quamvis hoc quidam asserere conentur*" (Nor is form alone the essence of a composite thing, however much certain people may try to assert); Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, cap. II; quoted in Krąpiec, *Byt i istota*, 13.

11   Averroes, *In Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentaria* [Commenary on Aristotle's Metaphysics] (lib. VII, comm. 21), in *Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libri XIIII: Cum Averrois Cordvbensis in Eosdem Commentariis et Epitome* [Aristotle's Metaphysics Book 8: With Averroes of Cordova's Commentary and Epitome] (Venice: Giunta, 1574). Avicenna states the same thing in *Metaphysica sive Prima philosophia*, 5:90.

12   "*Patet igitur quod essentia comprehendit materiam et formam*" (Therefore, the essence clearly comprises both matter and form); Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, cap. II.

13   Ibid., 15.

14   Ibid., 23.

see this in the example of the word 'humanity,' which grammatically is a noun and possesses its own meaning, but in reality no thing or being corresponds to the word humanity, but only a form as an element of the structure of a being corresponds to it.

Thomas showed that essence is found in being in three different ways. The first way refers to God, in whom essence is existence.[15] Since God is a non-composite and pure being, God is also existence that is different from any other being.[16] The second way refers to intellectual substances created by God; their essences differ from existence. It is in each case, a created and limited existence, because it is not an absolute existence as in the case of God.[17] If it is a question of their essence (or nature), that is absolute, because it is not received by any matter.[18] Although intellectual substances are limited in existence, which they receive from God, they are absolute with regard to content. When translated into language that uses concepts of species, which comprehends a plurality of individuals, the essences are as individuals a species, that is, to speak in theological language, each angel is a species. This is because with respect to content, matter is the reason for multiplication, and each one is a different species. The third way concerns substances composed of form and matter. They are finite not only because their existence is from something else, but also their essence is finite because it is found in designed matter. Designed matter is the reason why the multiplication of individuals is possible within the same species.[19]

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15   "*Aliquid enim est, sicut Deus, cuius essentia est ipsummet suum esse*" (For there is something, God, whose essence is his existence itself); ibid., cap. v, 35–36.

16   "*Unde per ipsam suam puritatem est esse distinctum ab omni alio esse*" (Hence it is that by virtue of its purity it is distinct from all other); ibid., 36.

17   "*Secundo modo invenitur essentia in substantiis creatis intellectualibus, in quibus est aliud essentia quam esse earum quamvis earum essentia sit sine materia. Unde earum esse non est absolutum sed receptum et ideo limitatum et finitum ad capacitatem naturae recipientis*" (In a second way, essence is found in created intellectual substances, in which existence is other than essence, although in these substances the essence is without matter. Hence, their existence is not absolute but received, and so finite and limited by the capacity of the receiving nature); ibid., 37.

18   "*sed natura vel quidditas earum est absoluta et non recepta in aliqua materia*" (but their nature or quiddity is absolute and shall not be received in any matter); ibid.

19   "*Tertio modo invenitur essentia in substantiis compositis ex materia et forma in quibus etiam esse est receptum et finitum propter hoc quod ab alio esse habent, et iterum natura vel quidditas earum est recepta in materia signata. Et ideo sunt finitae et superius et inferius, et in eis etiam, propter divisionem materiae signatae, possibilis est multiplicatio individuorum in una specie*" (In a third way, essence is found in substances composed of matter and form,

There is still a fourth type of essence that includes accidents. In this case, the essence is incomplete because if the essence is what we express in a definition from the cognitive side, we must consider the subject in whom it occurs. Thus, a substance is part of an accident's essence because an accident has its being in a substance. As a substance possesses its own existence that includes the connection of form with matter, so an accident possesses existence that includes its connection with substance, and that is accidental existence.[20]

How does Avicenna's position appear upon the background of these distinctions? Avicenna distinguished three states of essence: in the individual, as a concept, and in itself. Then metaphysics would be directed to the last, essence in itself, and so, metaphysics would de facto be separated from the concrete being and from knowledge.

When Thomas discussed Avicenna's view, he presented it as follows: essence can be considered in a non-relativized way with regard to the proper components of essence, that is, with regard to what belongs to essence as such, and what is contained in the definition. In this approach, animality and rationality belong to humanity as such, but not, for example, whiteness.[21] On the basis

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in which existence is both received and limited because such substances have existence from another, and again because the nature or quiddity of such substances is received in designated matter. And thus such substances are finite in both a superior way and an inferior way, and among such substances, because of the division of designated matter, there can be a multiplication of individuals in one species); ibid., 40.

20   "*Definitionem autem habent incompletam quia non possunt definiri nisi ponatur subiectum in eorum definitione; et hoc ideo est quia non habent esse per se absolutum a subiecto, sed sicut ex forma et materia relinquitur esse substantiale quando componuntur, ita ex accidente et subiecto relinquitur esse accidcentale quando accidens subiecto advenit*" (But accidents have incomplete definitions, because they cannot be defined unless we put a subject in their definitions, and this is because they do not have absolute existence per se apart from a subject, but just as from the form and the matter substantial existence results when a substance is compounded, so too from the accident and the subject does accidental existence result when the accident comes to the subject); ibid., cap. VI, 41.

21   "*Natura autem vel essentia sic accepta potest dupliciter considerari. Uno modo, secundum rationem propriam, et haec est absoluta consideratio ipsius, et hoc modo nihil est verum de ea nisi quod convenit sibi secundum quod huiusmodi, unde quicquid aliorum attribuatur sibi falsa est attributio. Verbi gratia homini in quantum est homo convenit rationale et animal et alia quae in definitione eius cadunt; album vero aut nigrum, aut quicquid huiusmodi quod non est de ratione humanitatis, non convenit homini in quantum quod homo*" (Nature or essence thus understood can be considered in two ways. First, we can consider it according to its proper notion, and this is to consider it absolutely. In this way, nothing is true of the essence except what pertains to it absolutely: thus everything else that may be

of essence itself thus understood, we cannot affirm plurality or unity, because plurality and unity (or singularity) can belong to essence. That is, it does not follow from the definition of 'man' that there is one man or that there are many. There may be one, and there may be many.[22] Plurality cannot belong to the essence of humanity, because then Socrates, who is one, would not have one human nature in himself, yet he has one human nature. Neither does singularity belong to the essence of humanity, because there are many human beings, Socrates, Plato, and others.[23] Essence apprehended in itself is beyond unity and beyond plurality. What does this mean? In reference to the conception of nature apprehended in an absolute sense, and so the nature that Avicenna called the 'third nature,' Aquinas said in a few short words that such a nature did not exist.[24] On one hand, the essence of man qua man cannot exist in one particular individual, because then it would not exist apart from that individual. On the other, if the essence of man qua man could not exist in any particular individual, then it would not exist in any individual. Nature taken

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attributed to it will be attributed falsely. For example, to man, in that which he is a man, pertains animal and rational and the other things that fall in his definition; white or black or whatever else of this kind that is not in the notion of humanity does not pertain to man in that which he is a man); ibid., cap. III, 24).

22 "*Unde si quaeratur utrum ista natura sic considerata possit dici una vel plures neutrum concedendum est, quia utrumque est extra intellectum humanitatis, et utrumque potest sibi accidere. Si enim pluralitas esset de intellectu eius, nunquam posset esse una cum tamen una sit secundum quod est in Socrate*" (Hence, if it is asked whether this nature, considered in this way, can be said to be one or many, we should concede neither alternative, for both are beyond the concept of humanity, and either may befall the conception of man. If plurality were in the concept of this nature, it could never be one, but nevertheless it is one as it exists in Socrates); ibid.

23 "*Similiter si unitas esset de ratione eius, tunc esset una et eadem Socratis et Platonis et non posset in pluribus plurificari. Alio modo consideratur secundum esse quod habet in hoc vel in illo, et sic de ipsa aliquid praedicatur per accidens, ratione eius in quo est, sicut dicitur quod homo est albus, quia Socrates est albus, quamvis hoc non conveniat homini in eo quod homo*" (Similarly, if unity were in the notion of this nature, then it would be one and the same in Socrates and Plato, and it could not be made many in the many individuals. Second, we can also consider the existence the essence has in this thing or in that: in this way something can be predicated of the essence accidentally by reason of what the essence is in, as when we say that man is white because Socrates is white, although this does not pertain to man in that which he is a man); ibid., 24–25).

24 "*Et tamen ipsi naturae secundum primam considerationem suam, scilicet absolutam, nullum istorum esse debetur*" (Nevertheless, if we consider the essence in the first, or absolute, sense, none of these pertain to the essence); ibid., 25.

absolutely, said Thomas, abstracts from any existence, but it does not exclude any existence. Such a nature is predicated of all individuals.

Therefore, it must be clearly emphasized that from the metaphysical viewpoint, which looks to the order of being, the concept of species as connected with human nature exists according to the mode of being that is in the intellect.[25]

Human nature, as apprehended by the intellect, is separate from individuals because it is found in the intellect and has being in the intellect. The being of human nature is separate from everything individual, but also, for this reason, it can be predicated of all individuals that are outside the intellect. It is predicated in the same way and allows us to know all beings that are human beings on account of the similarity in them. That universality of the nature of species is on account of predication. However, human nature apprehended in the intellect itself is an individual image. On this point, Thomas criticized Averroes. On the basis of the universality of the concept, Averroes wanted to demonstrate the universality of the intellect. Thomas's view was that universality concerns predication that pertains to individuals that are outside the intellect and does not concern a concept (which contains the content of a nature, a species) as existing in the intellect, because in the intellect, it is something individual. It has being in an accidental way, since a concept is not the essence of the intellect.[26]

To summarize, nature or species can be considered as predicated of particular individuals, and then the nature is universal, or, it can be considered as

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25   "*Falsum enim est dicere quod essentia hominis, in quantum homo habeat esse in hoc singulari; quia si esse in hoc singulari conveniret homini in quantum est homo, et nunquam esset extra hoc singulare*" (For it is false to say that the essence of man, considered absolutely, has existence in this singular, because if existence in this singular pertained to man insofar as he is man, man would never exist outside this singular); ibid.

26   "*Et haec natura sic considerata est quae praedicatur de individuis omnibus.... Similiter etiam non potest dici quod ratio generis vel speciei accidat naturae humanae secundum esse quod habet in individuis, quia non invenitur in individuis natura humana secundum unitatem ut sit unum quid omnibus conveniens, quod ratio universalis exigit. Relinquitur ergo quod ratio speciei accidat humanae naturae secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu*" (And the nature thus considered is the one predicated of each individual.... Similarly, the notion of genus or species does not pertain to human nature as an accident arising from the existence that the nature has in individuals, for human nature is not found in individuals according to its unity such that it will be one thing in all the individuals, which the notion of the universal demands. The only possibility, therefore, is that the notion of species pertains to human nature according to the existence human nature has in the intellect); ibid., 25–26).

existing in the intellect, and then it is individual, because it is only an accident of the knowing intellect. However, a nature or essence apart from individuals and apart from the intellect is out of the question. Such a nature does not exist because its content is at the level of logical intentions that are considered without regard to the function of predication, but that content as a content exists accidentally in the intellect.

Thomas had at his disposal an existential conception of being in which existence is the act of being, and he could determine the ontological status of "essence" with respect to its place in the concrete being-substance, and also with respect to its place in the human intellect that formulates concepts, and also at the level of the content of essence, whether in being or in the intellect. When existence is not considered at all or, is put to the side, for example, as an accident, then the content of a concept can be freed from its connection with the individual being from which the process of knowledge started, and from its connection with the concept as existing individually in the intellect. The result is a third nature, an essence in itself, which would become the foundation of future ontology. Arguably, that reasoning is a mistake from the metaphysical viewpoint.

Essence apart from Reality—Duns Scotus

In his analysis of essence, Scotus disagreed with Thomas and looked primarily to Avicenna.[27] Also, Scotus broadened the concept of essence (or nature) to its furthermost limits as it were, because he included the concept of being in it. Hence, he spoke of the essence or the nature of being, and not only of essence in the framework of a species, genus, or category.[28] Aristotle could not have agreed with speaking about the essence of being because being, which was divided into the categories, also called the highest genera, did not possess an essence or a nature.

The determination of the status of essence in a narrow sense, that is, in the framework of species, was in accordance with the views of Avicenna, but not in accordance with the views of Aristotle. Essence exists in three ways: *ante res*

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27   Scotus cited Avicenna more often than he did Aristotle, because Avicenna was, for him, the main reference in understanding metaphysics; cf. Ibrahim Madkour, "Duns Scot entre Avicenne et Averroes," in Congressus Scotisticus Internationalis. *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, 172.

28   Krąpiec, "Byt" [Being]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 1:767.

(before the thing), *in rebus* (in things), and *post res* (after the thing).[29] In this context, Scotus rejected the Aristotelian theory of abstraction, and this meant a sort of return to Platonism. It was the theory of abstraction that connected essence as the object of scientific knowledge of the thing, and it did not put essence in some realm beyond the thing. Abstraction in the Aristotelian sense was not necessary to Scotus, since common nature (*natura communis*) is already in the concrete thing.[30] Here, we need to note an important distinction: a common nature is not the same as a universal nature (*natura universalis*).

A common nature is the foundation of universality, but in itself it is not universal. Only by the active intellect does the common nature become a universal nature, and the *universale physicum* becomes the *universale metaphysicum*.[31] For Scotus, the agent intellect performed a new role that did not consist in revealing the intelligibility in a mental image so that the intelligible content could be received by the passive intellect as compatible with the passive intellect. The agent intellect formed a representation independent of the mental image. That representation became the object for the intellect, and it became knowable regardless of whether the real thing existed or not. This meant that the role of a medium as a transparent medium, a role very important in knowing, disappeared.[32] Then, according to Scotus, the agent intellect had the role of relating what was already intelligible (which also expressed the concept of the common nature) to many individuals. Thus, the agent intellect was needed at the level of the predication of one nature concerning many individuals, which from the metaphysical viewpoint, is a secondary matter. Here, we are dealing with the degradation of the function of the agent intellect, and this means that there had to be some sort of return to Platonism, except that the return was enriched, on the one hand, by the conclusions of the Arab philosophers, especially Avicenna, and was enriched, on the other hand, by Christian theology.

We should remember that the question of concepts, which was crucial in the controversy between realism (Aristotle) and idealism (Plato), by the choice of the side of ideas, but at the cost of losing the ability to cultivate a science that concerned the world around us, found its resolution in Aristotle's philosophy by the theory of abstraction. The theory of abstraction, starting from the world known by the senses, would explain how the immaterial contents of concepts arise in our intellect. Meanwhile, Scotus turned to Platonism, except

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29   Madkour, "Duns Scot entre Avicenne et Averroes," 181.

30   Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto metafisico e teologo*, 115–116.

31   Ibid.

32   Avicenna had already taken such a position; cf. Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 95–97.

that this version of Platonism was tinted with Christian theology. In this way, as in many other cases, theology stood higher than philosophy, even though, in questions not concerning Revelation, that priority is not necessary or even helpful. It is a question of explaining the structure of human knowledge, not a question of interpreting revelation.

Scotus thought that the essences of things were intuitively knowable just as they actually exist; they were knowable just as things exist in themselves.[33] This meant that Scotus rejected the Aristotelian distinction between the order of knowledge and the order of being. Aristotle thought that a thing does not exist in the same way that we know it, just as in the case of a concrete thing that concretely exists, but we know the thing in a general way through concepts. When the order of being corresponds to the order of human knowledge, then we are dealing with Platonism.

We may ask, is this certain? As it turns out, it is not completely certain. For Scotus, Platonism was weakened by the Christian dogma of original sin. The individual thing (*haecceitas*) could be intellectually known, but not in the condition in which human beings presently find themselves; human beings suffer the effects of original sin and are in what Scotus called a state of pilgrimage. The individual thing as individual is knowable, but we do not actually know it as individual; rather, we know it upon the background of the general nature as the individualization of the general nature.[34] Scotus thought that the actual intellectual knowability of the concrete thing as a concrete thing did not belong to the present state of humanity, and so, in principle, it could not be a philosophical fact given to be explained. Scotus did not see any problem here, and that was because he was primarily a theologian and had no intention of distilling philosophical knowledge to make philosophy autonomous and thereby also independent of theology.

This theory is interesting, but we are no longer dealing here with philosophy, but with a conflation of philosophy and theology, because the described premises concerning original sin and the state of pilgrimage do not belong to philosophy but to theology. For that reason, strictly speaking, it has no philosophical value, despite those motifs being constantly present in the integral presentation of Scotus's system, as if there were a natural marriage of philosophy and theology.

Scotus thought that both existence and the presence of the concrete thing were left aside in abstract knowledge. That kind of knowledge referred only

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33   'secundam (cognitionem)' (second [knowledge]); Krąpiec, *Byt i istota*, 172.

34   S.J. McGrath, "Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language," 352.

to the essence of a thing as to a general nature.[35] The fact that existence is left aside in abstract knowledge is obvious because existence is not a feature or a content, and so, every act of knowledge focused on content must leave existence aside.

Do we really know the essence primarily in separation from the concrete thing or as the essence of this concrete thing? If the essence were primarily known in itself or as a general nature that would mean that it becomes in a fundamental sense cognitively independent of the concretely existing being. This would have to lead to essentialism, which put essence over being, which, to summarize, means that really existing being would not be an object of philosophical knowledge or explanation.

Let us turn once again to Scotus's theory of knowledge. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec explains that in the Scotist:

> process of abstraction we do not start from the individual nature, but from the common nature (*natura communis*) and from its indefiniteness we move to the indefiniteness of the general nature, the conception of the universal. This movement can be made only by the 'active intellect' (*intellectus agens*) since neither the imagination (which does not possess in itself the indefiniteness of generality) nor the possible intellect (precisely as potential) can do this. Thus, the intellect is the father, as it were, and the object is the mother, as it were, of the new intellectual fetus—the abstract concept.[36]

The imagination, which played such an important role in Aristotle's philosophy because it already contained a certain degree of immateriality, and so, facilitated the discovery of conceptual immateriality, is here only a designation that directs the active intellect to the common nature, and the common nature is indifferent to both individuality and universality.[37]

When abstraction is understood in this way, it ceases de facto to be abstraction, because after all Aristotelian abstraction, that is, the connection of induction (*epagogé*) with separation (*aphaíresis*), consisted in the cognitive actualization of the necessary contents contained in a phantasm; the phantasm was a middle stage between the sensory knowledge of the concrete thing, and the concept that the intellect created of the concrete thing. In the Scotist version, the individual is already intuitively apprehended as an essence, and

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35   Krąpiec, *Byt i istota*, 172.
36   Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, 15n10; cf. Krąpiec, *Byt i istota*, 172–173.
37   Krąpiec, *Byt i istota*, 172–173.

universality appears because of abstraction, but abstraction does not look to the phantasm. To summarize, "the common nature determines the unity of our cognitive experience—it is the unity of essence."[38] In such a situation, both our individual (intuitive) knowledge and our general (abstract) knowledge imply a reference to something else, that is, to what Avicenna called a third nature.[39] Essence, in its most important meaning, is found beyond the individual and beyond the concept; as a common nature it is neutral to universality and to individuality.[40] This is a departure from Aristotle, for whom essence had to be in the concrete thing, and it is a departure from Thomas, who because of his existential conception of being, even more strongly than Aristotle showed the accidental existence of essence in the intellect, as the existence of concept that is a property of the knowing intellect.

Since for Scotus, existence is subordinated to essence, the problem of the real existential status of essence (nature) becomes secondary. When Thomas said that being is determined by existence, as a result of which essence cannot be drawn out beyond the concretely existing being, whether it is a known substance or a knowing subject, for Scotus, it was no longer a problem. Essence became something in itself that could be in an individual, in a concept, or somewhere outside of all that as a third nature. The decisive factor here is not so much the concept of essence, but the concept of existence, which no longer performed the function of the chief act of being, but was marginalized. Yet the existence of substance is the foundation of real being; various properties have a substance as their subject. Essence in itself is not a substance and it does not really have existence, but it is at most an intellectual project that arises upon the canvas of general concepts that the intellect has formed, and the embryo of those concepts is the concrete thing that can be known by the senses. Thus, when we speak of something in terms of being, we must ask a fundamental question: Does it exist? The ontological status of each thing depends upon existence. Essence can exist in a subject as the subject's most important determination and then it is connected with substantial existence as the essential part of the substance. Nonetheless, the same essence (from the

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38   Ibid.

39   "Thus when we know a man, we know that 'humanity' in itself is neither general nor individual"; ibid.

40   "Yet the common nature is neither singular nor universal. It is 'contractible' to a singular in real things, though there is nothing in nature as such by which it could be 'contracted' or determined to this or that one individual; no nature however inferior or contracted enable us to say 'this is this' (no. 8)"; J.R. Cresswell, "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature," in Ryan and Bonansea, *John Duns Scotus*, 128–129.

aspect of content) can be found in the human intellect, and then it does not possess substantial existence, but only possesses accidental existence, since it then becomes a concept of the intellect and not a part of a substance.

According to Scotus, the individual is a synthesis of common nature with concreteness; he calls concreteness (*haecceitas*), or to translate literally, 'thisness.' Scotus does not look to the previously known sub-structural elements of being to explain individuation, but he introduces a new element. If the indicative pronoun 'this' refers to a concrete thing, then concreteness of thisness is the reason for concreteness. However, this thisness is only thisness, a kind of primitive category that causes different individuals to appear in the world. *Haecceitas* and common nature are already formally capable of differentiation in a particular individual, but they are not actually something that is one.[41]

In Scotus's conception, essence, although it can be found in a concrete material individual (*haecceitas*), is ultimately something that, in itself, is independent of that concrete thing. That nature is the main object of metaphysical inquiries.

In this context, the Scotist conception of existence as a mode of essence begins to play an important role. Although this nature is not beyond the concrete thing, even so, it possesses a mode of existence proper to itself, and as such, it exists and it is a being. Plato did not need to defend this aspect of ideas because the problem of existence was not then a philosophical problem. But while that was a problem for Scotus, this does not mean that it could not serve Platonism. The idea-essence has an existence peculiar to itself, and therefore, it is a being, although that existence is not the existence of this concrete thing (*haecceitas*) or intentional existence (as the existence of a concept in the intellect). If essence can be considered in itself, this means that it possesses an existence property to itself; that existence is the modus of essence, and differs only formally from essence. If essence did not possess such an existence, we could not think about it. Nonetheless, we can think about it and consider it in itself. This means that essence is as actualized essence, and existence can be

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41   We may not marginally say that Scotus, in his works, only uses the term '*haecceitas*' three or four times, and very rarely; his successor promoted the term as one of the terms most typical of Scotism; ibid., 131. When Scotus presented his theory of individuation, he used the expression '*ultimata realitas formae* (ultimate form of reality), but the term is still absent in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The term appears in Scotus's "Ordinatio" [Ordination], lib. II, d. 3, 1, q. 1–6. In Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 8; cf. Keisuke Shibuya, "Duns Scotus on 'ultima realitas formae'" [Duns Scotus on 'Ultimate Form of Reality'], in *Giovanni Duns Scoto. Studi e ricerche nel VII Centenario della sua morta* [John Duns Scotus: Studies and Research in the Seventh Centenary of His Death]. 2 vols., ed. Martín Carbajo Núñez and Caesar Saco Alarcón (Rome: Antonianum, 2008), 1:379–394.

the act of essence; existence is only a mode of essence, but what sort of mode it is depends on what sort of essence we are dealing with, whether essence as *haecceitas*, as a concept, or as a third nature.[42]

Meanwhile, for Thomas, existence is an act, and in relation to existence, everything else is only potency, with the exception of the one and only being, the Absolute, in whom existence is identified with essence. For Scotus, on the other hand, essences are acts, and therefore, they can be treated each as something in itself; the essence that is apprehended outside the individual and not as a concept, but as a content in itself, is the most important essence for metaphysics. At that moment, when existence is somehow a mode of essence, the essentialist conception of being reaches its apogee; this is because existence as a whole becomes, as it were, a product of essence. As a result, the analysis of being as what concretely exists becomes insignificant, because essence in itself is what is most important. In this way, Scotus paved the way for ontology, for which the main object of knowledge is not really existing being, but essence in itself.

Essence according to Suárez: The Return to Duns Scotus

Suárez, unlike Scotus, tried to present Thomas's position with the greatest possible accuracy, both in the theory of existence and in the theory of essence, elucidating what they are and how they are related. However, Suárez ended up supporting Scotus's position and diverging from that of Aristotle and Thomas.[43]

The definition of essence, which later became part of the history of ontology, may be found already in Suárez' second disputation, which is devoted to a more precise formulation of the object of metaphysics; the object of metaphysics is the concept of being (*De rationale essentiali seu conceptu entis*).

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42   Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto*, 72, 119–120.

43   This applies not only to the conception of essence in a metaphysical sense, but also applies to essence in the process of human conceptualization. This is because Suárez thought that the agent intellect does not reveal the generality in a mental image, which was of key importance for the Aristotelian theory of abstraction. According to Suárez, the mental image as material cannot influence the immaterial operations of the intellect. Thus, concepts come only from the intellect, and what the intellect knows is not a sensibly apprehended material thing, but is precisely the objective concept. We can know it independently of the material thing, since the material thing is not necessary for a concept to arise. In this way, the road is open for ontology, which investigates essence independently of their real realization in a concrete being; cf. Cronin, *Objective being in Descartes and in Suárez*, 78–87).

Suárez first analyzes the problem of the concept of being with regard to how it is apprehended and what it contains. In the first three sections, the following questions arise in order: does being qua being possess in our mind one formal concept common to all beings (*Utrum ens in quantum ens habeat in mente nostra unum conceptum formalem omnibus entibus communem*, I)? or, does being possess one concept or formal objective reason (*Utrum ens habet unum conceptum seu rationem formalem objectivam*, II)?, or, is the reason or concept of being in reference to things and before knowledge in some way made precise by other determinations (*Utrum ratio seu conceptus entis re ipsa et ante intellectum sit aliquo modo praecisus ab inferioribus*)?.

Finally, in the fourth section, the question concerns what the reason for being qua being is, and in what way it pertains to lower beings (*in quo consistat ratio entis in quantum ens, et quomodo inferioribus entibus conveniat*). Suárez first gives an account of the controversy on this topic between Avicenna, Thomas, and Scotus. In the introduction, he explains that being is one objective concept, which contains within it a formal or essential reason, although this reason cannot be defined since it is the most abstract (*abstractissima*) and the simplest (*simplicissima*). Thus, it is a question of recognizing the ultimate reason for the concept of being, a reason that is apprehended in an abstract concept. In Avicenna's case, being designates existence itself (*ipsum esse*), which is an accident because it can either belong or not belong to a being. According to Suárez, being is understood in this way when the word 'being' (*ens*) is derived from the verb 'I am' (*sum*), and in an absolute sense it denotes the act of being or existence (*actum essendi seu existendi*). Suárez also explains that, in the case of *esse* and *existentia*, they mean the same thing. Being designates what has the act of being or of existence, and that-which-is (*ens*) means the same thing as that-which-exists (*existens*). It should be noted here that Suárez invokes Aristotle, who says in the *Physics* that being is that which is.[44] This assertion of Aristotle is supposed to confirm that being is the same as that-which-is and that-which-exists, although in reality, the appeal to Aristotle means that Suárez did not consider that Aristotle did not at all have in mind existence as an element of being or as an accident.

Suárez explains further that the existence of which he speaks is something that in a formal sense is outside of the thing's essence.[45] So we know for the

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44　*Unde apud Aristotelem, lib. 1. Phys., text. 17 et saepe alibi, loco entis ponitur id quod est, id est* (Therefore according to Aristotle, Physics, 1, 17 and in other places, being is what is, namely what has an act of essence or of existence).

45　*Dicit ergo ens de formali esse seu existentiam quae est extra rerum quidditatem* (Therefore, being, or existence, in the formal sense, is said to be outside of the essence of things).

time being that the word 'being' can refer to existence, which is something formally different from essence. Domingo de Soto was supposed to have shared this opinion. He remarked that in a material sense, being refers to what possesses existence (*quod habet esse*). However, in this last case, where the emphasis is shifted to the subject (that which), the word being can refer both to what is in act and to what is in potency.[46] Soto goes on to say that being is predicated essentially not only of presently created things, but also of things that are capable of existence, and that existence is found outside the essence of the creature.[47]

In this short passage, it is easy to see what happened with the concept of being, and so, in what way it was essentialized. After doing justice to existence, at least on the etymological level, Suárez reports the views of Soto, who, in turn, drew on Cajetan's commentary on Aquinas's *De ente et essentia*, and he arrives at being in a material sense, that is, being as referring already to essence. Here, it turns out that the word 'being' can refer to what is possible. Why? Soto presents a notable example, which, in turn, allows us to see that both Soto and Suárez did not see any difference between the word in the sense of a predicate (or copula) and in the existential sense, and Suárez had written of the second sense somewhat earlier. Soto said that we can truthfully call a human being who does not exist a being, saying that a man is an animal or a substance (*quia de homine non existente vere dicitur ens, sicut esse animal vel substantiam*).[48] Suárez did not respond to this example in his commentary to make it clear that the word was used in a completely different supposition than that in which it was used a few lines later. In the end, 'is' indicates the copula in a sentence, and it does not have an existential sense. Suárez did not see this difference; he treated the existential and the conjunctive meaning as equal in rank in their role of determining the various conceptions of being qua being. The only problem is that they are not the same. The conjunctive or copulative function does not concern a concrete being but concerns an arrangement of abstract contents that are cognitively and ontologically separate from being. Nonetheless, such contents (which constitute the content of a definition) do not present

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46   *Postea vero declarat ens non solum significare quod actu est, sicut existens, sed quod est actu vel potentia* (Afterwards declares that being not only signifies what is in act, as existing, but also what is in act or in potency).

47   *Ens non dici quidditative de rebus praesertim creatis, quia dicit habitudinem ad esse, quod est extra essentiam creaturae* (Being is not said in an essential way about things especially created, because it can be said about things which are apt for existence, and what is out of the essence of what is created); all quotes in this paragraph are from Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. II, 4, 1–2.

48   Ibid.

any obstacles preventing one from passing on to essence while ignoring real existence. Soto made that passage, and he did so by the road we know, the road of many early ontologies, that is, by appealing to essence as remaining within the range of God's creative power.

The point is that the abandonment in philosophy of existence as the act of real being makes room for essence as creatable (*creabile*). It does not matter that such an essence does not really exist. Such an essence, it would seem, is something more than an element of being. It is something more than an abstract content cognitively derived from a really existing concrete thing. It is something more than all that because it still has value by its relation to God's power; that relation can turn out to be more important than concrete and real existence. Essence is *creabile*, and it is something in God that could be created.[49]

The conception of being wherein the relation to existence is ignored is a way of treating being as a transcendental thing, since essence is presented in being as a thing. Suárez strongly emphasized this moment in Soto's views and said that a thing is a being without a relation to existence.[50] In this way, Soto reified the concept of being in a transcendental sense, that is, he made it independent. This opened the way to liberate, as it were, essence from existence, but at the level of metaphysical analyses, at the cost of breaking the cognitive contact with being as existing. When it is a question of being (*ens*), it is not predicated in a purely essential way because it does not designate an essence in an absolute sense but with respect to existence (*sub ratione essendi*). But what sort of existence is it? As it turns out, it does not need to be actual existence, merely the possibility of existence is sufficient.[51] If, however, the possibility of existence is sufficient, then an essence that is non-contradictory possesses such a possibility. In that case, the concept of being must be reduced to essence. If existence is not actual then its role in the constitution of being is immediately marginalized, and essence is immediately put on center stage.

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49   Gérard Sondag, "Duns Scot sur le créable" [Duns Scotus on the Creatable], *Revue Thomiste* 103 (2003):435–449.

50   "*Et in hoc constituit differentiam inter ens et res, quod res quidditative praedicatur, quia significat quidditatem veram et ratam absolute, et sine ordine ad esse*" (And in this the difference between being and thing is constituted, namely that a thing is predicated essentialy, because it signifies absolutely the true and ratified essence, and without subordination to existence); Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. ii, Sect. 4, 2.

51   "*ens autem non praedicatur quidditative, quia non significat absolute quidditatem, sed sub ratione essendi, seu quatenus potest habere esse*" (being is not predicated essentially, because it does not signify essence absolutely, but under the appearance of existence or insofar as something can have existence); ibid.

Suárez tried to set in order the discussion on being, essence, and existence by introducing the distinction between being in the sense of a participle and being in the sense of a noun. Being as a participle includes existence because *ens* (the participle) comes from *sum* (a verb). That is, in this case being means something that actually exists (*estque idem quod existens actu*). Being understood as a noun (*nomen*) formally designates the essence of a thing (a thing is not an act or an activity, but it is something static), which possesses existence or can possess it. Thus, not only a thing, but a being in the second meaning mentioned, does not need actually to exist in order to be a being. Such a being can be in potency to existence, or the mere ability or possibility of coming into existence is sufficient.[52] In this way essence appropriates, as it were, the concept of being then the being is taken as a name or noun. This is because the essence is capable of coming into existence. Thus, a being capable of coming into existence is identified with an essence. The essence is the fundamental meaning of being in the nominal sense. What is the essence? Essence is something that is not nothing. It is sufficient to be non-contradictory in order not to be nothing.[53]

With all this said, could there have been another conclusion? At the moment when reflections on being are reduced to the grammatical point of view, then when the question is posed based on a grammatical category such as a noun, this must lead to the elimination of actual existence, because actual existence is not a thing but an act; that act is very adequately, although not fully, expressed by the grammatical category of the verb, but not by the category of the noun. It is not fully expressed because the role of existence in being qua being as an act is completely unique. None of the other activities expressed by verbs can be compared with the act of existence. When Suárez introduced the distinction between being as a participle and being as a noun, he was not so much setting positions in order as he was presenting solutions to the controversy over how being should be understood by pointing to essence.

Therefore, it is not strange that after those analyses, one particular definition of essence appears rather than some other, and it is called 'real essence'! The definition is as follows: *essentia realis: quae ex se apta est esse, seu realiter*

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52   "*interdum vero sumitur ut nomen significans de formali essentiam eius rei quae habet vel potest habere esse, et potest dici significare ipsum esse, non ut exercitum actu, sed in potentia vel aptitudine* " (however sometimes is taken as a name signifying the formal essence of a thing, which has or can have existence, and can be said to signify the very existence, not in act, but in potency or aptitude to have existence); ibid., Sec. 4, 3.

53   W. Hoeres, "Francis Suárez." In Ryan and Bonansea, *John Duns Scotus 1265–1965*, 278–283.

existere,[54] meaning, real essence is an essence that of itself is capable of exis-
tence or that really exists.[55] Suárez does not eliminate from the concept of es-
sence an essence that really exists, but he puts it on a par with an essence that
merely can exist. This means that it is not important for an essence whether it
really exists. The existence of an essence is a completely secondary matter, just
as the concept of being is secondary, because the concept of being has been re-
duced to the concept of essence. It is here that we see a gradual transition from
metaphysics to ontology. The transition is gradual because we still hear of actu-
ally and really existing essence, while in later ontologies, possible existence or
essence without real existence demarcate the field of philosophical analyses.

    Of course, Suárez was too strongly rooted in the tradition of Scholastic phi-
losophy to make such a sudden leap from metaphysics to ontology, but his
European students, who looked only at the analyses made in the *Disputationes
Metaphysicae* and were not burdened with reading medieval treatises and the
controversies in them, occupied themselves with the analysis of essence with-
out regard to the real existence of essence.

Essence that is Real because It is Possible: Clauberg and Wolff

Johannes Clauberg's dissertation, *Elementa philosophiae sive Ontosophiae*
(1647) is one of the first works in ontology, and all the more it is worth checking
how essence is understood in that work. When Clauberg describes essence he
says, "to speak as briefly as possible, in a proper sense with this name [essence]
we describe everything through which a thing both is, and is what it is."[56] Es-
sence (*essentia*) as thus understood can be treated as a universal (*generale*),
whatness (*quidditas*), something the real existence of which is found outside
the intellect (*quod esse reale extra intellectum obtineat*), but which in itself
is not nothingness (*quo ipso quasi extra nihilum ponitur*). It can also mean
a concrete substance (*speciale*) that has its own existence (*quod hoc esse re-
alem habeat, non aliud*). That substance is *haecceitas*, as Clauberg thought was
the opinion of the scholastics.[57] As we see, Clauberg is appealing not only to

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54   Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. II, Sect. 4, 7.

55   S. Fernandez Burillo,"Introducción a la teoría del conocimiento de Francisco Suárez," 216.

56   "*essentiam itaque, ut brevissime dicam, proprie appellamus totum illud, per quod res et est,
        et est quod est*" (an essence, shortly speaking, is rightly called everything due to which a
        thing is and is what it is); Johann Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 60; quoted in Pius Brosch, *Die
        Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg* [The Ontology of John Clauberg], 50.

57   Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 140; quoted in ibid., 51.

Suárez, but to Scotus, although Clauberg is not fully aware of this since he re-
gards the concept of *haecceitas*, which is so typical of Scotus, as representative
of scholasticism as a whole. In this context, it becomes clear that *ontologia vel
ontosophia* is a continuation of the metaphysics of Scotus.

This is also confirmed by the way the value of possibility is enhanced. Pos-
sibility is defined as that to which coming-into-existence is not opposed, and
thereby possibility is what may be called objective potency.[58] Possibility is
non-contradiction, and impossibility is internal contradiction (*quod contra-
dictionem implicet in conceptu*).[59] There is no mention of potency qua potency,
that is, potency as different from possibility and from act. Possibility is the
main level on which Clauberg's *ontosophia vel ontologia* moves.

The introduction of existence does not change much here. While Clauberg
says, "existence that due to which being is in act, or due to which it possesses
essence in act, constituted in the nature of the thing," the answer to the ques-
tion of the status that this existence possesses and the extent to which this
existence is a topic of interest for ontology is a fundamental matter.[60] Clau-
berg says that essence does not contain existence, but one cannot be sepa-
rated from the other.[61] This is thus a reference to Scotus's position that Suárez
later repeated: existence is not contained in the concept of essence, but on
the other hand, between the one and the other there is no real difference, and
therefore, one cannot be separated from the other. In this context, Clauberg af-
firms the impotence of the 'ontological proof' for the existence of God: if con-
tingent being (*ens contingens*) is that which exists, but which is capable of not
existing, then necessary being (*ens necessarium*) is incapable of not existing.[62]
With respect to contingent being, essence is most important because essence
contains what is unchanging, and so, is similar to eternal truths.[63]

In summary, Clauberg's position is a continuation of a certain current of
scholasticism inspired by Scotus and perpetuated by Suárez, a current that

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58   "*Possibilitas est non repugnantia ad existendum, in eo quod a causa aliqua produci potest,
      vocaturque potentia obiectiva*" (Possibility is not repugnant to existing; it is that which can
      be produced by some cause, and is called objective potency); Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 84; in
      ibid., 54.

59   Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 90; quoted in ibid.

60   "*Hinc existentia dicitur, per quam ens actu est, seu per quam habet essentiam actu in rerum
      natura constitutam*" (This is called existence, through which a being is in act or actually
      has essence in reality); Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 78; quoted in ibid., 53.

61   "*essentiam et existentiam a se mutuo separari non posse*" (essence and existence cannot be
      separated from each other); Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 92; quoted in ibid., 56.

62   Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 95; quoted ibid.

63   Ibid.

Clauberg takes for scholasticism as a whole. The conception of being, the way possibility and essence are explained, and the conception of existence, all form the framework of modern ontology, which would find its apogee in Wolff's system.

In his ontology, Christian Wolff looks directly to Suárez. The main point of reference here is the definition of being as what can exist, and this means that being is that to which existence is not opposed.[64] Wolff then explains that what is possible can exist, and so, what is possible is also a being.[65] Thus, the criterion for beingness is non-contradiction. Anything that is non-contradictory can be called being. While Suárez formed a two-part definition of being, the first part of which spoke of actually existing being, and the second of which spoke of what can exist, for Wolff possibility is enough.

This is not all; the next phase is the introduction of determination to the non-contradictory concept of being in order to move further and further to the final determination. This strongly calls to mind the layer-based model of the concept of being proposed by Scotus. What other way could there be if the starting point is a non-contradictory concept of being, and so, an empty concept of being? After non-contradiction, Wolff points to elements that will not have the status of first elements, under the condition that they are not contradictory among themselves, that they are not determined by other elements, and that none of them determine another.[66] Those elements are the *essentialia*, or that which determines the essence of a being.

Essence here plays a primary role because the essence is cognitively ap-

prehended when we understand a being, and without a being there is no essence.[67] The next determinants are attributes, and the attributes, in turn,

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64   "*Ens dicitur quod existere potest, consequenter cui existentia non repugnat*" (Being is said to be what can exist, consequently it is that to which existence is not repugnant); Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, ps I, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 134; cf. Gilson, *L'etre et l'essence*, 173.

65   "*Quoniam illud existere potest, quod possibile est; quod possibile est, ens est*" (for that which is able to exist, is what is possible; what is possible, is being); ibid., ps I, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 135.

66   "*Si ens quoddam concipiendum, primo loco in eo ponenda sunt, quae sibi mutuo non repugnant, quae tamen non per alia determinantur, nec quorum unum per alterum determinatur*" (If being somehow has to be conceived, in first place these elements should be put in it, which mutually do not combat each other, and which are not determined by something else, and one of them does not determine another); ibid., para. 142.

67   "*essentia primum est, quod de ente concipitur, nec sine ea ens esse potest*" (essence is the first thing, which is conceived about being, and without essence a being cannot exist);

are determined by the *essentialia*.[68] Attributes can be properties (*proprium*), since the attributes are determined by all the *essentialia*, and when they are determined by certain *essentialia*, they are common attributes (*attributum commune*).[69] When properties are not determined by *essentialia* but are not opposed to *essentialia*, then the properties can belong to a being.[70] Finally, when something is not opposed to the *essentialia* and even is through them, although it is determined to the least possible degree, it is called a *modus*. This is a type of property that, according to Wolff, was called an accident (*accidens*) or a predicable (*praedicabile*) by the scholastics.[71] To summarize, being is the *essentialia*, an attribute, or a mode.[72] Since the *modus* does not come from the essence or from the attribute, it can come from another mode of the same being or from the mode of another being, but ultimately it is essence that makes it possible for the modes to appear.[73]

Essence is at the center of the Wolffian conception of being qua being and the properties of being. According to the definition Wolff proposed, essence is what is understood in being as what is first, and in this is contained the sufficient reason why certain things [properties or modes] are in the essence in act or can be in it.[74] Wolff, as he explains, took this conception of essence from Suárez.[75]

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ibid., para. 144.

68   "*Quae per essentialia determinantur, dicuntur Attributa*" (What is determined by essentialia, is called attribute); ibid., para. 146.

69   Ibid.

70   Ibid.

71   Ibid., para. 149. Heat is a mode of a stone.

72   Ibid., para. 149.

73   Ibid., para. 167; Gilson, *L'etre et l'essence*, 175.

74   "*essentia definiri potest per id, quod primum de ente concipitur et in quo ratio continetur sufficiens, cur cetera vel actu insint, vel inesse possint*" (essence can be defined by what is conceived first about being and in what a sufficient reason is contained, for the rest either is in act, or can be); Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, ps I, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 168.

75   "*Sane Franciscus Suárez e Societate Jesu, quem inter Scholasticos res metaphysicas profundius meditatum esse constat*" (To Franisco Suárez from the Society of Jesus, who among Scholastics after deeper meditation explained existence). In *Disputationibus Metaphysicis* [Metaphysical Disputations], vol. 1. disput. 2 Sec. 4, §5. f. 57; "*essentiam rei id esse dicit, quod est primum et radicale ac intimum principium omnium actionum ac proprietatum, quae rei conveniunt*" (the essence of a thing is called that which is first, radical and the innermost principle of every action and property that belongs to a thing); ibid., para. 169.

What, then, is existence? Existence is the completion of possibility, that is, the actualization of possibility.[76] In this way, Wolff ascribes to existence the function of an act, only it is an act not in relation to a potency, but in relation to a possibility, and that possibility turns out to be ontologically stronger than Aristotelian potency, since potency is matter, and possibility is essence. However, existence is secondary to essence since, as Wolf had emphasized earlier, essence is what we understand as first in being.

A being that exists is an actual 'being in act,' while a being that can have a sufficient reason for its existence in other existing beings is a possible being or a 'being in potency.'[77] In this case, Wolff does not see any difference between potency and possibility, because potency would also be only a possibility. From the point of view of possibility as typical of essence, the absence of this difference does not play any role.

Kant: Separation from Essence

Because of the Kantian critique of metaphysics, the science of being qua being had to disappear because being is unknowable and no concept of being can be formed; the new metaphysics would grow, not in the traditional sense as the science of being, but in the Stoic sense, wherein ethics was in the first position. Just as the doctrine of Scotus was regarded by Protestant neo-scholastics as representing all scholasticism, so Kant regarded the Stoic division of philosophy not only as representative of ancient philosophy, but as a complete division.[78] Upon the canvas of this division, Kant established his own way of understanding metaphysics. It was either the metaphysics of nature (in connection with physics) or the metaphysics of morality (in connection with ethics). The term 'metaphysics' appears in the context of a description of what

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76   "*Hinc Existentiam definio per complementum possibilitatis: quam definitionem nominalem esse patet*" (This existence I define as a completion of possibility: this definition is nominal); Aristot. *Logic* §191); "Dicitur existentia etiam Actualitas" (Existence is also called actuality); ibid., para. 174.

77   "*Ens, quod existit, dicitur ens actuale, vel etiam ens actu: quod vero ad alia existentia relatum in iis habere potest rationem sufficientem existentiae suae, ens potentiale seu ens potentia appellamus*" (being, which exists, is called actual being, or being in act: but what to other existence is related having in it a sufficient reason for its own existence, is called a potential being or being in potency); ibid., para. 175.

78   "Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: physics, ethics, and logic. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the thing and one cannot improve upon it" Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 4, 387.

philosophy is. Kant said that metaphysics is divided into that which has its grounds in experience, which is empirical philosophy, and that which is based only on a priori principles, which is pure philosophy. Pure philosophy can be purely formal, in which case it is logic; or, it can refer to definite objects of the intellect, and then it is metaphysics. However, within metaphysics there is no science of being qua being (which Kant does not even mention), but there are the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morality.

The word 'metaphysics' refers to the rational part, whether physics or ethics.[79] In both cases, metaphysics has the task of discovering the laws of nature or morality that reason discovers in itself as a priori. This means that metaphysics is neither concerned with being qua being, nor with the investigation of essence. The objects of metaphysics are the a priori laws of the action of nature or of human conduct, the source of which is not found in the object, but in the knowing subject.

We may ask, why is such investigation called metaphysics? Kant explains that the purpose of metaphysics is to grasp three ideas: God, freedom, and immortality, and the other objects are only the source to reach those ends by going beyond nature.[80]

As we can see, Kant refers to a meaning of the word 'metaphysics,' in which metaphysics is identified with 'trans-physics,' the science concerning what is beyond (*trans*) nature. As we recall, that was the Neoplatonic version of the translation of the title *tà metà tà physiká*. In Kant's case, it was not only a question of what is above nature, but also a question of what is beyond nature, that is, what is beyond experience and which constitutes the a priori endowment of human cognitive faculties. Since nature and morality come to the center of attention, it is mainly a question of discovering the laws that govern nature and morality, and not a question of essences. This is because in Kant's system, the a priori category that constitutes the object is the counterpart of essence, or, the form of the known object. In that event, this is not an essence that would belong to being qua being, but it is only constitutive for the object, that is, for that which functions only in relation to knowledge, because only by knowledge does it becomes an object. The object is a synthesis of the contents of impressions with the a priori categories present in the human cognitive faculties. Meanwhile, essence in the modern ontologies was independent of human knowledge, and essence was even independent of actually existing reality. The Kantian revolution in philosophy seemed to have buried essence once and for

79   Ibid., Ak 4, 388.
80   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 395.

all, and thereby it seemed to be the end not only for metaphysics, but also for ontology. That did not happen. Essence returned in Hegel's system.

Hegel: The Absolutization of Essence

The conception of essence in Hegel's conception is an integral part of his philosophical system. That system, at its starting point, identifies being with a concept, and the content of the concept of being is described by abstraction. As a result, the concept of being appears to be completely empty. Hegel draws from this a conclusion that went much further than in the thought of Scotus. When Scotus speaks of non-contradiction as the minimal content of being, Hegel remarks that being contains contradiction since "pure being and pure Nothing are therefore, the same."[81] This conclusion seems to be logical, but only if it is assumed that the way that one has arrived at the concept of being is correct.

Why did not Scotus draw such a conclusion, but stop at non-contradiction, whereas Hegel went a step further? The answer is complex. First, Hegel abused the word 'non-contradiction,' because contradiction appears at the level of judgments, not at the level of concepts. Second, contradiction means self-exclusion, not dynamism. Hegel did not make a distinction between contradiction and the other types of opposition that Aristotle mentioned in his *Categories*.[82] That short work, as we recall, in ancient times and Middle Ages was at the foundation of philosophical education, but Hegel was evidently not familiar with it since he did not see those differences. Finally, non-contradiction opened the possibility of activating divine creative power, but Hegel already identified the concept of being with God treated as the Absolute. It was the absolute, by way of contradiction, that was supposed to be activated to pass through the various phases apprehended in the framework of the laws of dialectic. Throughout the process, essence appears; essence is not understood as the form of a concrete being nor as a species or genus, but as an aspect of being as such, which was understood evidently in Hegel's own way.

When Hegel translated the meaning of a word from the etymological side, he did not look to the Latin word or to the Greek word, but to his own native language, where the word '*Wesen*' is supposed to come from the form '*gewesen*' and is supposed to mean something that belongs to the past but in a non-temporal way.[83] This interpretation indicates an attempt to provide a de-

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81   G.W.F. Hegel. *Science of Logic*, 59.

82   Aristot., *Cat.* 11b–14b .

83   Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 337.

scription of what the Greek imperfect tense contains, but the same tense does not contain the same meaning in the German language. Non-temporality or what is intransitive and does not pass away, which would describe essence, is important. This raises the question, how is this related to the dynamic conception of being?

Depending on the aspect, Hegel in one way or another described what essence is. When he was discussing being as knowledge, then knowledge discovers essence when it is 'externalized' as it goes out of immediate being. When being enters into itself by its nature, it becomes essence. This is being in which everything that is determined and finite is negated. Essence is something absolutely the same in itself and for itself. It is the perfect return of being to itself. The determinations of being are taken away in it. As absolutely simple and non-composite, essence does not have existence. It occupies the first position between being and concept; it constitutes their middle term, and the movement of essence is the transition of being to concept. Essence comes from being as the first negation of being. When it deposits such a negation, it gives existence to itself; the existence is equal to essence's being in itself, and it becomes a concept, that is, an absolute that is something absolute in its own existence.[84]

This short selection from the description of essence in Hegel's system can be analyzed in more detail by Hegelians, but for the purposes of our reflections, that is, concerning the place of essence in ontologies, it is important to consider that essence was not only separated from concrete being and from predication at the level of species, but is also subjected to a curious absolutization, and becomes an aspect of the relation between the concept of being and the Absolute. This absolutization entails the attribution of existence to essence by virtue of internal necessity, with the result being that the 'ontological proof' for God's existence is shifted to the existence of essence. In Hegel's system, essence exists by necessity because it is an expression of the Absolute. The price to be paid is the complete separation of human knowledge from existing reality in which essence and existence are different. Hegel's system, and so, his ontology, does not take that reality under consideration.

Essence in Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the contemporary current that, to the greatest degree, looks to the concept of essence. Edmund Husserl is the main originator and representative of that current. In Husserl's work, we may discover a continuation of

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84   Ibid., 338–339.

the tradition of medieval ontology, but Husserl had never studied that tradition, and so, he was not fully aware of what that tradition was.

Husserl defined 'phenomenology' as the science concerning essence, and not concerning facts and real objects, which is what psychology considers.[85] What is most important is that Husserl, unlike modern ontologists, did not intend to defend the reality of what is possible. On the contrary, he connected the motto of the suspension of judgment concerning the real existence of the world directly to his program. Husserl used the Greek word '*epoché*' (ἐποχή, suspension) for this suspension of judgment. The word '*epoché*,' in Stoic terminology (Chrysippus), also meant suspension of judgment. At the same time, Husserl renounced sophistry (in which, according to him, the existence of the world is negated), and skepticism (when one doubts the existence of the world). He was interested in the possibility of a cognitive apprehension and analysis of essence qua essence, and not essence as an element of the really existing world, because that existence is put in brackets.[86]

Husserl treats what is known as a phenomenon that can be apprehended either in concrete individuality, or as an essence (*Wesen*, *eidos*, *Washeit*, *Essenz*). The term '*Essenz*' means constitutive properties or essence-related laws.[87] Husserl recommends that *epoché* should be used, because we can apprehend something's essence whether we start from any evidential empirical data or from purely imaginative evident apprehensions.[88] The author of phenomenology is convinced that the apprehension of essence does not imply any refer-

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85 "Psychology is an experiential science. Two things are implied in the usual sense of the word 'experience': (1) It is a science of facts, of matters of fact in David Hume's sense. (2) It is a science of realities…. In contradistinction to that, pure or transcendental phenomenology will become established, not as a science of matters of fact, but as a science of essences (as an "eidetic" science)"; Edmund Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht : Kluwer Academic, 1983), xx.

86 "We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being: thus the whole natural world which is continually 'there for us,' 'on hand,' and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an 'actuality' even if we choose to parenthesize it. If I do that, as I can with complete freedom, then I am not negating this 'world' as though I were a sophist; I am not doubting its factual being as though I were a skeptic; rather I am exercising the 'phenomenological' *epoché*, which also completely shuts me of from any judgment about spatio-temporal factual being"; Ibid., 61.

87 H. Kiereś, "Fenomenologia" [Phenomenology]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 3:399.

88 Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, 11.

ence to a concrete being (a fact) or to the existence of a concrete being.[89] What does essence contain? Essence contains generality and necessity, which are counterparts of each other.[90]

Is phenomenology in this description not ontology? In the framework of a priori knowledge (because it does not appeal to the existence of the real world), it encompasses what is necessary and possible at the level of essence, and that is precisely ontology.

Although Husserl initially regarded metaphysics as the science concerning what is factual, and ontology as the first science that investigates essence, he abandoned that view in favor of a more powerful connection with phenomenology as the science that would reveal pure transcendental consciousness (*noesis*) and its correlate (*noema*) as the expression of the primary, original, and absolute foundation that connects what is subjective with what is objective. On the basis of this attitude, the kinds of possible consciousness are described; possible consciousness demarcates objective possibilities from all domains of the world, such as natural science or the humanities, and everything in the framework of a priori, absolute precise, and original primary knowledge.[91]

To summarize, Husserl lost interest not only in metaphysics (as the science concerning factual being), but in ontology as the analysis of pure essences, because he focused his attention on an attempt to reach pure consciousness as the source of which essence is the correlate. Husserl's phenomenology moved from ontology, which was supposed to open a transition to metaphysics, a return to the real world as it were, to a position of a still higher idealism. The core of that idealism was pure consciousness, which is more primary and original than any essence, since that pure consciousness can make itself into a noema without any need of any other essence for this purpose.[92]

The emancipation of essence from the real world pushed Husserl toward the complete correlation of essence with pure consciousness. Because essence demarcated the field of what is necessary and possible, the conclusion would follow that essence is the foundation for all sciences. What room would there be for really existing being and the essence of really existing being? Neither necessity nor possibility demarcate the field of really existing being. Therefore, phenomenological ontology does not contain metaphysics, and it does not

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89   "Essentially connected with this is the following: Positing of and, to begin with, intuitive seizing upon, essences implies not the slightest positing of any individual factual existence; pure eidetic truths contain not the slightest assertion about matters of fact"; ibid.

90   Ibid., 14.

91   See this Chapter n84.

92   Ibid.

lead to metaphysics. It does not contain metaphysics because it moves about in the realm of possibility, and it does not lead to metaphysics because in the desire to explain the genesis of essences, instead of becoming open to reality it withdraws even deeper into consciousness. In the end, concretely existing reality becomes superfluous.

When Husserl speaks of metaphysics, he emphasizes that phenomenology does not exclude metaphysics, with the exception of metaphysics that is naïve and "operates with absurd things in themselves."[93] It is regrettable that the author of *Cartesian Meditations* did not explain what sort of naïve metaphysics he had in mind. For him, phenomenology is most important. Phenomenology discovers the first sphere of existence, which is 'transcendental intersubjectivity.' It "precedes and upholds every form of objective existence that belongs to the world."[94] Thus, the beings that belong to the world do not possess their own existence. That existence hangs upon 'transcendental subjectivity.' If so, then we have an evident example of idealism. There is no passage from that idealism to realism. What would the purpose of such a passage be? Since content (essence) and existence depend completely on consciousness, even if it is transcendental consciousness, the passage to the world of things and persons existing outside consciousness is impossible, because there is no such a world. When Husserl explains what he understands by the universe of monads, that is, of subjects constituted by 'transcendental subjectivity,' he appeals to the notion that they are 'actually existing,' but as it turns out, he includes among them monads taken as ideal essential possibilities that can be thought of.[95] Thus, even existing essences are still possibilities and do not really exist.

The next step would be the passage to the particular sciences that uses the foundations that phenomenology provides.[96] In this way, phenomenology also would allow a return to the world, since, as Husserl explains, "positive science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by *epoché*, in order to regain it by universal self-examination."[97] This sublime sentence, which concludes the *Cartesian Meditations*, is an answer to a fundamental question. Is the world to which we turn after performing *epoché* for certain the real world? The question can be rendered more precisely. Is it the world that really exists independently of transcendental intersubjectivity? In phenomenology, Husserl's answer has to be negative. It is the world of necessary and possible essences, but not of

93   Edmund Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 156.
94   Ibid.
95   Ibid.
96   Ibid.
97   Ibid., 157.

essences that really exist. Even if Husserl opens the gate for 'contingent factuality' (for example, death), he does not treat it as a metaphysical problem (the counterpart of the contingency of being), but treats it instead as an ethical-religious category.[98] From essence as phenomenologically apprehended, there is no passage to really existing being, and so, there is no passage to essence as that which constitutes an integral component of an ontological structure.

Why can essence not be grasped in our cognitive contact with concretely existing being? It seems that Husserl did not know the Aristotelian conception of abstraction. This follows from how he describes abstraction, which he associated with the psychological theories of his time.[99] Ideas are concepts, and concepts are 'products of abstraction.' Husserl is opposed to that position and thinks that ideas, as they contain necessary and general contents, cannot be products. This is a reasonable position. However, Aristotle's position in his controversy with Plato contained a completely different theory of abstraction, which was far from the psychological theories. Concepts were not products of abstraction but were transparent media that allowed one to see in a concrete being what was general and necessary. When Husserl criticized the theory of abstraction, he argued against the version of it that had a psychological orientation, not against the version developed by Aristotle. It is not strange that as he did not know Aristotle's version and saw the weak points of psychologism, he could at best perfect the idealism that was started by Plato.

When Husserl writes about existence, he looks to the Scotist tradition, in which existence is a mode. Husserl thus distinguishes between modes of existence, but he fails to say the existence that would be the act of a concrete being qua being. The description of types of existence and the role of existence for a particular thing (object) is dominated by ontological terminology, not by metaphysical terminology.[100]

Thus, essence in Husserl's phenomenology loses its metaphysical function and becomes an element of ontology; ontology is a component of a yet higher body of knowledge, the philosophy of consciousness. Essence does not explain real being but remains a part of world that is necessary in the arrangement of its content, but is possible in the sense of real existence. It can be called a thing, an object, a noema, but it is not a being that really exists in itself. It is only a correlate of noesis, that is, a correlate of consciousness. Essence in this conception cannot belong to metaphysics, because it belongs mainly to ontol-

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98   Ibid., 156.
99   Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, 41–42.
100   Ibid., 249–250.

ogy and to the philosophy of consciousness, which constitute the whole that Husserl calls phenomenology.

Heidegger—Illusory Critique of Essence

Martin Heidegger, although he was a student of Husserl, took his own ontological reflections in another direction. Heidegger concentrated on being as apprehended through the prism of the human being or presence (*Dasein*). Being qua being, or being as essence, in this realm of investigation was subjected to criticism. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine how Heidegger understood essence. In "Question on Technology," Heidegger writes: "'Essence' in the language of academic philosophy means what something is, in Latin: *quid*. *Quidditas,* whatness (*Washeit*) answers the question concerning essence. Real and possible trees fall under it [essence] as a general species, a '*universale*.'"[101] As we see, Heidegger looks to the ontological tradition in the understanding of essence, the precursors of which were Avicenna, Scotus, and Suárez. This is because Heidegger thinks that essence includes what is possible, although he did not consider Aristotle or Thomas.

As Heidegger continues with his reflections on essence, he does not consider the difference between products of nature and artifacts, and so, he speaks both the essence of a tree and of the essence of technology. Yet this is an essential difference, because the essences of natural beings determine them from within at the substantial level, while artifacts only concern accidents.

Heidegger presents examples that are intended to analyze what essence is. The examples are *Hauswesen* (household management) and *Staatswesen* (the state of being a political state). The German words contain something absent in other European languages. The word '*wesen*' is part of the composition of the German words, and as an independent noun (*das Wesen*) we may translate it precisely as essence. At that moment, a doubt arises right away, whether the German language can be the authoritative measure for a term and a concept that appeared as a philosophical problem in the Greek language and then in the Latin language. Would the German term be more fundamental than the Greek term? It might seem to be a misunderstanding, all the more since the German term '*wesen*' was first introduced in the German language by Meister Eckhart, who wanted to popularize it among persons who did not know

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101   Martin Heidegger. "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, 2nd ed., ed. David M. Kaplan (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 20–21.

Latin.[102] On the one hand, the term is loaded with a purely German meaning. On the other hand, it is loaded with the mystical and idealistic philosophy of Meister Eckhart. The term becomes key for Heidegger, and with the term, he wants to undermine the Greek and Latin understanding of essence.

Unlike the Greek and Latin terms, the term '*wesen*' has a dynamic sense, as the process of 'essentialization' rather than a fixed essence. Essentialization is a process of becoming, and therefore, Heidegger explains:

> If we speak of the 'essence of the house' and the 'essence of a state,' we do not mean a generic type; rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop and decay—the way in which they essence" (*wie sie wesen*)"[103]

The first flaw in this line of reasoning is that it does not look to being and nature, but to artifacts where the position of essence is different. In artifacts, essence is an accident, which is contingent upon real being, and it does not ontologically permeate the being. The essence of a cabinet in the metaphysical sense is an accident that is contingent upon the essence of wood. The essence of wood is what constitutes the substantial form of wood, while the essence of a cabinet is not the substantial form of wood or of a cabinet.

The second flaw concerns the examples as such, which are not well chosen from the viewpoint of ontological categories. The management of a household and the state are not counterparts of substances, but are counterparts of the weakest ontological category, which is that of relations. In that case, what sort of analogies and conclusions can be presented on the topic of essence in the metaphysical sense, if we take as our basis the German language, which is so different from the Greek language, and if we look not to real being, but to artifacts based on the category of relations?

Obviously, neither the state nor the household arise in a single moment, but they become what they are. Since they are artifacts, there is no essence in them; instead, the essence must be as the exemplar cause in the intellect of the person or people who form the household or state. We do not discover the essences of those artifacts, but in their author, since at the level of the artifacts there is really only the process of becoming. However, that is not the essence of which classical philosophy speaks. As he continues with his etymological arguments, Heidegger connects *wesen* with *währen*, which semantically and

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102   Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande* [Mystical Sources of the German Romantic Philosophy] (Paris: 1968), 17.

103   Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 21.

phonetically refer to duration or staying. At that moment, Heidegger jumps across to the Greek language and to Greek philosophy to demonstrate that, for Socrates and Plato, essence was something that endures, but it endures constantly, that is, essence is what is constant and stable. "That which remains they discover, in turn, in the aspect (*eidos*, *idea*), for example, the Idea 'house.'"[104]

This interpretation is questionable, because Plato very rarely used human artifacts as examples, but also because an external outlook that can be sensibly grasped cannot be the counterpart of an idea, and that is because what is sensible changes and is concrete. A concept, which is constant and general, and not an object of sensory knowledge, is the proper counterpart of an idea in a knowing subject. The expression 'outlook' (*Aussehen*) is thus most greatly out of place as the counterpart of an idea.

Heidegger continues: "But it can never in any way be established that enduring is based solely on what Plato thinks of as *idea* and Aristotle thinks of as *to ti ên einai* (that which any particular thing has always been), or what metaphysics in its most varied interpretations thinks of as *essentia*."[105]

How is it that it cannot be justified? Plato and Aristotle thought that essence means that which endures and is constant and necessary, but they disagreed about the level where the essence is located. Plato located essence in the 'Pleroma,' and Aristotle regarded essence as the form of a species that was indestructible despite destructible concrete individuals.[106] For those two Greek philosophers, that was what essence was; essence was not merely what always was (as Heidegger translates *to ti ên einai*), but essence was also what always is. Essence is what is constant because it is the reason for identity, and therefore, it plays such an important role in metaphysics. To see that role of essence, we must turn to being, not to artifacts, which as artifacts are not only accidental and intentional beings, but are also conventional beings. It depends on the artisan what shape he gives to a cabinet, and it depends on civilization what model of the household or state it accepts.

To summarize, Heidegger's critique of the concept of essence is very superficial, even loaded with errors, and especially because he does not look directly to the metaphysical order. The critique moves to history as an example of critique that somehow demolished the foundation of Greek metaphysics, in which essence, if it is a question of how being is understood, played the most important role. In reality, after a more precise analysis of the texts, we can say that the critique somehow gets sidetracked on account of digressions at the

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104   Ibid.
105   Ibid.
106   Aristot., *Met.* 7. 1033a 24–1034a 9.

level of the German language and on account of his translation of Greek terms, but also in the examples he presents.

Why should this be surprising? If essence is not rooted in real being, then the critique of essence will be relatively easy. Meanwhile, we should look to the beginning, and so, look to the reason why essence began to play such an important role in philosophy. Here, on the one hand, it is a question of finding the reason for the identity of being (without essences we would have complete variabilism). On the other hand, it is a question of indicating an adequate object for scientific knowledge (without essences scientific knowledge would have no object, at least, of course, in the Greek conception of scientific knowledge). Even if essence is accepted as essence a problem remains. What causes an essence to be real? At that moment, without looking to existence as an act, it is very difficult to preserve the proper status of essence as real essence. Without existence thus understood, essence is liable to become unreal, despite Aristotle's words of warning. It was this road, the road of essentialism, that Avicenna and Scotus traveled, and after them Suárez and modern ontologists. An essence that has become unreal loses its ontological weight and ceases to play its proper role in metaphysics. It leads either to idealism or becomes devalued as identical with the essence of artifacts. This makes it easy to criticize and reject essence. This means that only a proper connection of essence with existence allows us to preserve the metaphysical significance of essence and the role that essence should perform in our knowledge of being qua being.

CHAPTER 22

Ontology: Unreal Reality

While words such as essence, substance, and form belong to the language of philosophy as technical terms; they are understood most often in accordance with some particular philosophical system where one or another meaning is attached to them. The word 'thing' (*res*) and 'reality' (*realitas*), which is derived from thing, are words that belong primarily to ordinary language, and it seems perfectly obvious how they should be understood. This is because when we refer to a thing, and above all, when we refer to reality (perhaps even to a greater degree than in the case of the word 'being,' which is a technical term), we have in mind that which really exists. We contrast reality to what does not really exist because it is found only in our thoughts or imaginings, or something that does not exist at all. At the level of common-sense knowledge, the difference between reality and thinking about reality is very strongly marked, and it is even treated as an impassible chasm. This is because reality exists, whereas the act of thinking about something is merely thinking when something is not real and cannot be found on the side of reality. Every normal person sees the chasm between the act of eating an apple and the act of thinking about an apple, because an apple that is only in our thought, cannot be eaten; the mental apple does not exist, that is, it does not exist as a real apple, which amounts to the same thing. The question whether something is in the waking state or only the product of a dream is a dramatic question because it expresses the tension of a thought that, at some point, loses its ground and is unable to distinguish between intentional states and real states.

Meanwhile, it turns out that in the framework of ontology, the meanings of the terms mentioned above (both thing and reality) were so greatly modified that reality ceased to be real from the point of view of common sense. This question was not well known among philosophers, and especially among metaphysicians. This means that what is not real for a normally thinking individual who is not a philosopher is real for an ontologist.

In ontology, thought and its content become legitimate reality, and they are even treated as more real than reality, or even as the only reality. Then the question of reality loses its common-sense meaning in ontology, since in response it indicates something that cannot be regarded as reality in common-sense knowledge; for example, the content of a concept as a content in itself. This is because in common-sense knowledge, when we ask about an apple, we are not interested in information about the content of a concept, which for ontology is already real; we want to know about a true apple.

How did it happen that the concept of reality was subjected to such a perverse intellectual operation? Behind this situation are certain conclusions that appeared in medieval philosophy.

A thing (*res*) in medieval philosophy was a technical term, which meant one of the transcendental properties of being. Plato had spoken of the true, the good, the beautiful, and the 'one' in a dimension that encompassed all reality, and he had in mind the highest ideas in which lower ideas and the material world participated, while Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, spoke of what belongs to being qua being.[1] In that passage, Aristotle was concerned primarily with unity, since being and one are the same.[2] In the subtext of such a formulation, his intention was to refute the Platonic theory of ideas, since there is no unity as an idea, but unity is being apprehended from a certain point of view. Aristotle did not develop his theory of the properties of being any further; the theory was developed more during the Middle Ages. Philosophers were interested in the properties of being that exceeded the scope of the categories, and so, they began to call them the 'transcendentals' (from *transcendere*; to go beyond). The transcendental properties could be predicated of an entire being, or of an aspect of a being that did not comprehend the entire being, but at least transcended the categories.[3]

Avicenna introduced 'thing' to metaphysics. Thomas and Suárez later looked to Avicenna. All the more it is worth examining what Avicenna understood by thing and in what context he discussed it in metaphysics. The term 'thing' appears in the first treatise of the *Book of First Philosophy* in the chapter, "On the Meaning of Thing and Being and on Their First Divisions, which should Be Mentioned in Order to Understand Them" (*Capitulum de assignatione rei et entis et de eorum primis divisionibus ad hoc ut exciteris ad intelligentiam eorum*).[4]

Avicenna began his exposition with the assertion that a thing, a being, and necessity find their original reflection in the soul. This means that they do not come from other concepts.[5] This first sentence presents certain points that merit our attention. Here, we are dealing with the order of knowledge, not the order of being; because Avicenna is speaking about the way being is known.

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1   Aristotle, *Met.* 1003a 20–21.

2   Ibid., 1004 a 23–25.

3   Philip the Chancellor was the author the first treatise on the trancendentals (twelfth century).

4   Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, I, cap. 5, 31; Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de existence d'apres Ibn Sīnā (Aicenna)*, 3–4.

5   "*Dicemus igitur quod res et ens et necesse talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex alii notioribus se*" (We say that thing and being and necessity are at once imprinted in the soul as the first impression, which is not obtained from any other knowledge); Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, I, cap. 5, A 29, 1–4).

The next point is that thing is mentioned before being. Finally, the three transcendentals differ in the way they pertain to being, because insofar as being as a whole is being, being as a whole is not necessary. At this stage, Avicenna is concerned with connecting certain properties of being with our knowledge of being, where the most important consideration in the metaphysical inquiry concerning being is to establish what is first and what does not presuppose the possession of any prior concepts.

In the second passage, Avicenna again mentions thing and being (in that order), but the third term that appears is not necessity, but 'one.'[6] Here also, the order of knowledge comes into play. We can easily understand the triad in itself, which is mentioned here. Avicenna says that they are common to all things (*communia sunt omnibus rebus*). He could not have said this earlier, since necessity is not common to all things, because some beings are possible but not necessary.

We see that Avicenna was more committed to showing the accidental properties of being qua being with respect to their role in knowledge than he was interested in providing a complete list of those properties. Yet, let us begin with what constitutes a 'thing.'

Avicenna explains that a thing is that about which something true may be said.[7] He further asserts that whatever true thing may be said about a thing— its properties—may not be as well known as thing itself.[8] This claim then asserts that a thing exists cognitively prior to any knowledge of it; it is original. Finally, he says that nothing can be known and nothing can be truly stated, if it is not a thing or something, or this, or that.[9] Those expressions (this or that) are simply different words that refer to the thing.[10]

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6   "*Quae autem promptiora sunt ad imaginandum per seipsa, sunt ea quae communia sunt omnibus rebus, sicut res et ens et unum, et cetera*" (Which are more promptly to be imagined in themselves, are these which are common to all things, like a thing, being, and one, etc.); ibid., A 30, 25–28.

7   "*res est id de quo potest aliquid vere enuntiari*" (a thing is about what something true can be said); ibid., 37.

8   "*certe potest aliquid minus notum est quam res, et vere enuntiari minus notum est quam res*" (certainly it maybe something less known than a thing, and really it can be stated about less known than a thing); ibid., 38–40.

9   "*Igitur quomodo potest hoc esse declaratio? Non enim potest cognosci quid sit potest aliquid vel vere enuntiari, nisi in agendo de unoquoque eorum dicatur quod est res vel aliquid vel quid vel illud*" (So in what way can this declaration be understood ? Nothing can be known and nothing can be truly stated, if it is not a thing or something, or this, or that); ibid., 39–44.

10   "*… de unoquoque eorum dicatur quod est res vel aliquid vel quid vel illud: haec omnia multivoca sunt nomini rei*" (concerning any of them it can be said that it is thing or something

Next, Avicenna claimed that being (*ens*) and thing (*res*) have different meanings. On the one hand, being (*ens*) and something (*aliquid*) are different words that have the same meaning. On the other hand, 'thing' (*res*) and 'whatever'(*quicquid*) are different words that also have the same meaning, but are different from both being (*ens*) and something (*aliquid*).[11] He thought that 'thing' (*res*) and 'whatever' (*quicquid*) in all languages describe the certainty that something is precisely what it is; for example, a triangle is a triangle, whiteness is whiteness.[12] 'Something' (*aliquid*) is that which we treat as most proper to being. What is it? It is something that gives us certainty, and 'essence' is this something.[13] Hence, when we want to affirm the identity of something, it is more fitting to say with certainty that it is a thing, and by thing, we understand being, than to say that the certainty of something (as yet unknown) is the certainty that 'something is.'[14] Avicenna, in his examples, explains: It is one thing to state our certainty concerning *a*, but our certainty concerning *b* is a different matter. If something were not what it is, it would not be a thing.[15]

When Avicenna described 'being' with the help of 'thing,' his intention was to emphasize the being's identity, that 'this being is this being.' Since the word 'being' may have many connotations, 'thing' reveals in 'being' the identity of the being, or what Avicenna called the 'certainty' (*certitudo*) that this being is this being.

In his treatise, *Summa de bono*, which was important for the theory of the transcendentals, Philip the Chancellor did not mention 'thing,' because that the

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or this or that: these all are different names of a thing); ibid., 42; "*id et illud et res eiusdem sensus sunt*" (this and that and a thing have the same meaning); ibid., A 30, 47.

11   To avoid confusion in understanding an English exposition of the Latin works, it must be noted that the English translations of these terms that often result English words that may have quite different meanings from the ordinary language use of the same words; this applies particularly to terms such as 'thing,' 'something,' and 'separateness.'

12   "*Sed res et quicquid aequipollet ei, significat etiam aliquid aliud in omnibus linguis; unaquaeque enim res habet certitudinem qua est id quod est, sicut triangulus habet certitudinem qua est triangulus, et albedo habet certitudinem qua est albedo*" (The thing, or its equivalent, may be used in all languages to indicate some other meaning (*ma'nà*). For, to everything there is a reality (*ḥaqīqah*) by virtue of which it is what it is. Thus, the triangle has a reality in that it is a triangle, and whiteness has reality in that it is whiteness); ibid., A 31, 54–57.

13   "*unaquaeque res habet certitudinem propriam quae est eius quidditas*" (Every thing has a proper certainty which is its essence); ibid., 63–64.

14   "*Quod igitur utilius est dicere, hoc est scilicet ut dicas quod certitudo est res, sed hic res intelligitur ens, sicut si diceres quod certitudo huius est certitudo quae est*" (It is better to say if You declare that certainty is a thing, but this thing is understood as being, as when You would say that this certainty is a certainty which is); ibid., 71–73.

15   Ibid., A 32, 73–84.

treatise was written from a Neoplatonic position. Neither did the term 'thing' appear in the work of Albert the Great. Albert treated the transcendentals not merely as modes of our knowledge of being (*primae intentiones*), but also as modes of the being of being (*modi essendi entis*).[16]

Scotus held a different conception of the transcendentals. First of all, being understood as *natura commune* does not possess any property, because it is completely undetermined.[17] The properties of a being (*passiones entis*), are virtually contained in a being. Between them and a being, there is no mental difference, but there is a formal difference that results from the nature of things. For example, the true and the good are aspects that are really different from being. They are not being, but are qualifications of being.[18] They are divided into absolute (*unicae*), and these include unity, goodness, and truth, and disjunctive (*disiunctae*), and there we find pairs such as independent-dependent, absolute-relative, infinite-finite, prior-posterior, simple-composite, one-many, cause-effect, the determining end and that which strives for the end, that which is an efficient cause and that which is caused by an efficient cause, higher-lower, substance-accident, act-potency, similar-different, equal-unequal.[19] We see that thing is not mentioned among the first ones or the second ones. Did Scotus then not consider 'thing' as a transcendental at all, whether in an absolute sense, or as the member of a pair in an opposition? Not completely. We find thing elsewhere in an analysis of intellectual knowledge.

Scotus makes a distinction between two acts of intellectual knowledge. The first act apprehends its object without investigating whether the object really exists or whether it is really present. One example would be the universals that we apprehend as essences of things; we know the universals regardless whether they are present.[20] In the second type of knowledge, the object is

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16   A. Maryniarczyk, "Transcendentalia" [Transcendentals]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 9:534.

17   Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto metafisico e teologo*, 109.

18   Ibid., 111–112.

19   Scotus. *Traktat o pierwszej zasadzie* [Treatise on the First Principle], trans. Tadeusz Włodarczyk and Edward Iwo Zieliński (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), 107n8.

20   "*Unus indifferenter potest esse respectu objecti existentis et non existentis, et indifferenter etiam respectu objecti non realiter praesentis, sicut realiter praesentis; istum actum frequenter experimur in nobis, quia universalia, sive quidditates rerum intelligimus, sive habeant ex natura rei esse extra in aliquo supposito, sive non, et ita de praesentia et absentia*" (Someone can be indifferent in relation to an existing or not existing object, and indifferent in relation to the object which really or not really presented: we often experience such an act in us, because the universals or the essences of things we understand as having from

apprehended independently of its existence apart from the knowing subject and independently of real presence. This is abstract knowledge. The second type of knowledge is intuitive, and without mediation, it reaches the existing concrete thing, the *haecceitas*, which is the ultimate reality of being (*ultima realitas entis*).[21]

Despite such a clear description of the status of the existing concrete thing as the most important reality, thing and reality, according to Scotus, can also refer to that which exists only in the intellect. This happens when we refer to the concept of being, which is not apprehended from the physical viewpoint, but from the logical or metaphysical viewpoint. It is then non-contradiction, which exists only in the intellect. Scotus also calls it reality (*realitas*).[22] Scotus adds precision and says that this reality is indefinite, because it does not contain any internal determination (*modus intrinsecus*); it is an imperfect thing (*res imperfecta*), but nevertheless, a reality.[23]

This presentation of the matter, also at the level of the concept of being, a concept that is supposed to include all reality, opens the way for the concept as such of being, and not simply being as such, to be reality. This concept as being-concept is found at the antipodes of reality, because after all, it is not reality but a thought about reality; yet despite everything, it is regarded as reality.

In that case, if the concept of being is reality, then what stands in the way for other concepts with a narrow range of predication to become such a reality? Something that we apprehended cognitively becomes a thing (*res*), but without regard for whether a really existing thing does or does not correspond to that thing.

Henry of Ghent connected *res* with '*reor*,' which means to think or to believe.[24] In that case, that which exists in itself and independently of our knowledge is not reality, but that about which we think is reality. This etymological interpretation presented allowed the philosophical concept of reality to be distinguished from true reality.

Scotus also went by the same road, and this is even more explicit in his system; because of the continuing influence of that notion, the belief could

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the nature the existence in some supposition, or not, and on what is present or absent); Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 12, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, VI, art. 1, 18; Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 157.

21   Ibid., 160.

22   Barth remarks on this; cf. Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 43.

23   Honnefelder emphasizes this aspect; cf. ibid., 67.

24   Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 158; Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 434–452.

persist that a thing is something that does not have to exist, and so, reality could be something that does not really exist. Concepts, which as concepts, possess their own reality and their own existence, are such a reality. A position of that sort was liable to a nominalistic interpretation. William of Ockham said that the science concerning reality is not the science concerning what we know directly, but about what occurs as a representation of things.[25] In that case, concepts and representations alone become the reality known by science. Reality becomes identified with what is known without regard to any further relation to the reality that is found beyond the concept and beyond the representation.

In this way, the ground was prepared for the future ontology, and Suárez was the figure who gave the finishing touch to this conception of reality and things. He also mentioned thing among the six transcendentals (*ens, res, aliquid, unum, verum, bonum*).[26] He defined 'thing' as that which indicates the essence of a thing, as that essence is apprehended in the formal aspect. That essence is the real essence of a being.[27] Precisely because a thing refers to an essence, some thought that thing is more an essential predicate than a counterpart of being itself.[28] When Suárez discussed thing, he looked to Thomas, who, in his opinion, followed Avicenna and separated thing from actual existence to denote only essence with the help of thing. Meanwhile, 'being,' a name derived from *esse*, denotes an actually existing being. Hence, Thomas supposedly treated thing not as a transcendental property, but as an essential predicate because it does not indicate being but indicates essence.[29]

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25   "*Dico quod scientia realis non est semper de rebus tamquam de illis quae immediate sciuntur, sed de aliis pro rebus supponentibus*" (I say that real science is not always about the things that are immediately known, but about something else which is taken as a thing); William of Ockham, *Super quattuor libros sententiarum subtilissime questiones earumdemque decisiones* [On the Four Books of the Sentences] (Lugduni, Johann Trechsel, 1495), lib. I, dist. 2, q. 4, M; Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 175.

26   Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. III, Sec. 2, 1.

27   "*res solum dicit de formali rei quidditatem, et ratam seu realem essentiam entis*" (thing concerns only the formal essence of a thing, the confirmed or real essence of a being); ibid.

28   "*unde multi censent magis essentiale praedicatum esse rem quam ipsum ens*" (therefore, many think that a thing is more a essential predicate than being itself); ibid.

29   "*Quod si velimus haec duo in eo rigore distinguere quo D. Thomas supra ex Avicenna illa distinxit, quod res praescindat ab existentia actuali et meram quidditatem significet, ens autem sumptum sit ab esse et solum dicat ens actualiter existens, sic constat rem non significare passionem entis, sed esse praedicatum maxime quidditativum*" (If we want to distinguish strictly these two [thing and being] as St. Thomas [Aquinas] did following Avicenna above, that a thing prescinds from actual existence and only signifies essence, but being is taken from existence and expresses only what actually exists, so Thomas confirms that a thing does not signify a property of being, but an altogether essential predicate); ibid.

Suárez saw that the meaning of the transcendental thing was weakened because it lacked a connection with existence. Consequently, it became a predicate and not a property of being, since thing refers to essence, not to the entire being, while the transcendentals are supposed to encompass the entire being. As he continued his discussion of the various views, Suárez weakened the understanding of being as he looked to another position, the position that being is not only that which actually exists, but also includes what is capable of existence. This was in the context of his analysis of thing. Then, the distinction between being and thing would mean that being is the first property of a thing. Suárez regarded this as unproven, because in the first concept of real essence is contained the ability to exist, and here, a distinction was made between real essence and unreal or thought-of essence. In turn, Suárez thought that Averroes had asserted that thing denotes not only a real thing, but also a thing that is thought of.[30]

As Suárez presented his own position, he emphasized that thing does not formally contain a negation, because it is found in the truth (when we say that a true being is one that is not merely thought of), or it is found in unity (*unum*), or again in *aliquid* (in this case, *aliquid* emphasizing the connotation of separateness between things). In the last case, the point is that one being is separate from another, and thereby, it is also separate from being that is merely thought of.[31] If a thing contains something positive, then that is precisely a relation or reference to essence, while a being contains a reference to existence.[32]

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30   "*Si autem, iuxta opinionem quamdam supra tractatam, ens non solum ut dicit actu existens, sed etiam ut dicit aptum ad existendum, distingueretur a re, prout absolute dicit habens quidditatem realem, sic ens esset prima passio rei; sed hoc supra improbatum est, quia in prima ratione quidditatis realis intrat aptitudo ad existendum, et in hoc primo distinguitur quidditas realis a non reali seu ficta. In his ergo duobus nulla passio entis continetur. Scio Averr., in sua paraphrasi, c. de Re, dicere rem significare non solum rem veram, sed fictam; sed hoc commune est enti, et solum est secundum aequivocam significationem*"; (If according to the opinion treated above, being, which is not only the act of existence, but also is said to be what is apt to exist, is distinguished from thing, as signifying in an absolute way what has a real essence, then being would be the first property of a thing; but this is disproved, because into the first reason of the real essence enters aptitude for existing, and in this first property there is a difference between real essence and non-real or fictional essence. However, no property of being is contained in these two. I know that Averroes in his paraphrases says that thing means not only a true thing, but also a fictional thing; but what is common here is said only in an equivocal way); ibid.

31   Ibid., 13.

32   "*Et ita distinguuntur res et ens, quia hoc ab esse, illud a quidditate reali sumptum est*"; (And so thing and being are distinguished, because being is taken from existence and thing is taken from essence); ibid.

Suárez rejected Averroes's position. Averroes said that a thing could refer to a thing that was thought of. Suárez emphasized that he was concerned with a real essence. We must ask, what does 'real' mean? For Suárez, a real essence is not only an essence that actually exists, but one that does not reject existence, and one that can exist.[33] At that point, thing as a transcendental refers to essence, and an essence does not need actually to exist because it is sufficient for it to be possible. It is the thing understood in just this way that was associated with essence, and this paved the way to essentialism. In essentialism, reality is something that does not actually exist, and so, it is only possible reality. That is to say, something is real because it is possible. In this way, speculations on the transcendental thing bring the concept of thing and the concept of reality to the antipodes of realistic thought; there, reality is not only something that is possible, but even something that can be set in opposition to what is real. When someone is drowning, possible help is an absence of help; possible help is not help, and it ends in a drowning.

Since Suárez's position would be treated as authoritative for scholasticism as a whole, it is not surprising that his position would appear in the first ontologies as crucial for understanding being. Thus, Clauberg said that what philosophers call a 'being' is described in ordinary language as a 'thing' or as 'something.'[34] When Clauberg then explained what a thing is, he said that a thing is a substance to which accidents are opposed. Already in Aristotle's *Logic*, a thing, albeit in a strict sense, is a substance that does not only exist per se, but in a broad sense it is also something that is simply something (*aliquid*), that is, it is not nothing.[35] Thus, a thing is something that is not nothing. The thing can be presented on a par with an object, and an object, in turn, is that of

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33 Suárez's free connection of the real with the possible also concerns the important question of the object of metaphysics. This is because when Suárez mentions six different positions, he evidently supports being as real being (*ens in quantum ens reale*); ibid., disp. I, Sect. 1, 1, 26; and disp. II, Sect. 1, 1; but in the end, he also includes mental beings (*entia rationis*) and the possible under real being; cf. Gracia, "Suárez," in *Concepciones de la metafísica*, 106–110.

34 "*Quod a vulgo res et aliquid ... a philosophicis etiam ens apellatur*" (What by ordinary people is called thing or something ... by philosophers is called being); Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 6, quoted in Brosch, *Die Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg*, 20–21.

35 "*Res enim seu Ens sumitur vel generaliter et latè pro omni eo, quod est aliquid, non nihil; vel propriè et strictè pro eo, quod per se existit, et aliter vocatur Substantia, ein selbständig Ding*" (Thing or being are taken either in a general and wide way as anything, which is something and not nothing; or in a proper and strict sense as as that which exists by itself, and is called substance, an independent thing); Clauberg, *Logicae contractae* [Logical Contracts], 3rd ed. (Heidelberg: Wilh. Fitzer & Abrah. Lältz, 1670), para. 14; cited in Clauberg's

which one can think (*quod cogitari potest*).[36] To summarize, thing and thereby reality are the sphere of what can be thought of. The possibility of being thought of is sufficient for it to be reality.

The definition of thing that Wolff presented was located in the current discussed, but with the lack of precision typical of the author. Wolff wrote, "everything that is or can be understood bears the name of thing, which is something; therefore, a thing is defined as that which is something. Therefore, in the scholastics, 'reality' and 'essence' are synonyms."[37] Wolff identified a thing with separateness (*aliquid*), while thing and separateness formally have mean different meanings. The thing is shifted from the sphere of being to the sphere of knowledge, and finally, it is identified with essence, and this is the case not only with a thing but also with all reality. To summarize, reality consists of all essences that can be thought of.

When, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Edmund Husserl called for a return to things themselves (*zurück zu den Sachen selbst*), not only did he not have in mind the real world of things, but on contrary they were things already after the procedure of taking away reality, that is, after *epoché*; they were things that did not really exist, as a condition for the philosophical investigation of them.[38] Husserl went a step further than did ontology. When ontology opened itself up to what is possible, at least it did not eliminate what is real. Here, however, the elimination of what is real (*epoché*), was the condition for discovering things themselves. If we translate this position into the language of common sense, we may say that only that which is not real is a thing in the phenomenological sense.

Let us return, then, to Thomas and how he explained the meaning of the transcendental thing.[39] After some preliminary explanations to show what role the transcendentals play in reference to a known being, Thomas emphasized first that everything is contained in being, and so, the transcendentals

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    Opera omnia philosophica [Clauberg's Philosophical Works], 4 vols., ed. J.T. Schalbruchii (Amsterdam, 1691), 2:913.

36   Brosch, *Die Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg*, 21.

37   "*Quicquid est vel esse posse concipitur, dicitur Res, quatenus est aliquid: ut adeo* Res *definiri possit per id, quod est aliquid. Unde et realitas et quidditas apud scholasticos synonima sunt*" (Anything that is or can be, is called a thing, so far as it is something: so thing can be defined in relation to what is something. Therefore and reality and essence are synonyms for scholastics); Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, ps 1, Sec. 3, cap. 2, para. 243.

38   Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 1:67.

39   Aquinas, *ST* 1, Q39, A3, Art. 3; cf. O'Callaghan, *Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas*, 84–94.

cannot add anything because anything they could add would still be being. In the case of the transcendentals, the point is something else. The point is to express clearly what is not directly set forth in the concept of being.[40]

The clear expression is made in two ways, in a particular way, and in a general way. The particular way of expression consists in recognizing the various degrees of being and the various modes or ways of being, such as in the case of substance and the other categories. The general way of expression retains its own generality, and that generality comprehends being as a whole. In addition, the act of expression can be performed in two ways, positively or negatively. When we are speaking of being as such and of a thing, being as taken in itself (*ens in se*) is viewed positively.

In every being, says Thomas, its essence is apprehended. The transcendental thing is supposed to render the meaning of being as that which possesses an essence. Thomas looks to Avicenna and explains that the word 'being' (*ens*) comes from the act of existence (*sumitur ab actu essendi*), while the word 'thing' (*res*) expresses something or the essence of a thing (*nomen rei exprimit quidditatem vel essentiam rei*).[41] The point is that in the concept of being, we can put the emphasis on either existence or essence. When the emphasis is on existence, then the transcendental being appears, and when the emphasis falls on essence, then we have the thing. The Latin terms are helpful because in their etymology, they indicate these two different aspects. We see how, up to his time, the explanation is situated in a framework that we already know, and as it continues, Suárez's exposition does justice to Aquinas's position.

In this case, let us try to delve more deeply into the etymology of the word 'thing' (*res*) that Thomas presents. Here, matters become complicated, because in another work, Thomas does not present one etymology, but two different ones. The first etymology agrees with what Suárez calls to our attention, but the second etymology does not. In one case, a thing is something that refers to each and every being, including mental being (*ens rationis*). This happens when the word 'thing' is derived from *reor*, *reris*, that is, to have an opinion. *Res* is simply something about which we have some opinion, and so, it is something that does not have to be real, but it is enough for us to think about it. In the second case, the etymology is more restrictive. Guilt (*reatus*) and responsibility

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40   "*sed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere super ens, in quantum exprimunt modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur*" (Yet, in this sense, some predicates may be said to add to being inasmuch as they express a mode of being not expressed by the term *being.*); Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate.* [Questions and Disputations Concerning Truth], ed. Ordre des Prêcheurs (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1970–1975), Q1, Art. 1, resp.

41   Ibid.

(*rata*) come into play here. In this case, *res* pertains only to a real being, not to a being of which one thinks, a being that is non-contradictory, as the successors of Avicenna and Scotus thought. Possibility is not enough to determine any real responsibility. In the case of legal responsibility, it must be determined whether the fault is probable or factual, that is, real, and the verdict depends on this.[42] This is because a possible fault, or a fault that can be thought of, is not in any case a foundation for the court to reach a verdict. A fault must be actual and real.

As we see, etymology allows us to translate the word '*res*' in two ways, either as merely what we think, or as something that is in the real world independently of our opinion.[43] The problem with this is that neither Henry of Ghent nor Suárez considered this second interpretation, and so, they facilitated the transition from real being to possible being, so that possible being would acquire the status of real being.

Ultimately, while etymology can lead us to certain meanings, it does not resolve any questions. This is because 'what a thing is' as a philosophical question already depends on the philosophical context in which not only being qua being, but also the other transcendentals, are described. When Thomas included thing in the series of the transcendentals, he had in mind a cognitive emphasis on essence, but on essence as a non-independent element of being. Here, we find the main difference between Thomas and Avicenna, Scotus, and Suárez. Thomas was not concerned that an essence by the fact that it is a thing could become a being, but that a real being is composed of essence and existence, which are really different elements but are also subordinated to each other; because they are different elements, then without isolating them from the concrete being that those elements constitute, we can put the emphasis in knowledge on one or the other element, and this is the case also in the framework of the formation of the transcendentals.[44]

As soon as the composition of being from essence and existence is treated as purely mental (in Scotism) or real, but in a reified way (for Giles of Rome,

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42 Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sentientiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, I, D25, Q4, resp.

43 The German noun '*Ding*' meant a gathering (*Volksversammlung*) or a session of a court (*Gerichtsversammlung*); H. Köbler, *Deutsches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1995; s.v. *Ding*. In turn, in the English language, the word 'thing' can be predicated of fictions such as a monster or a golden mountain, while we are aware that they are not real things; cf. O'Callaghan, *Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas*, 90.

44 Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 109–118; Blanchette, "Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology," 8.

essence and existence were independent elements), then essence qua essence becomes a thing, and then simply becomes a being, or what is called 'reality.' Both versions of how the relation between essence and existence is understood, in which the real difference disappears or in which the road leads to reification, influence the treatment of essence as independent, where essence as thing fills the field of reality. Since essence is only possibility, the reality also is merely possible. However, if it is called reality, then even though it is possible, it remains reality, while really existing reality is pushed to the background or becomes superfluous.

At that point, we become aware of how the realistic field of philosophical terminology has been curtailed. There are no terms to emphasize the difference between reality and possibility. Being does not differ from the concept of being, reality does not have to be real, and a thing does not need to exist really, to be called being and reality. This is all because the various philosophical distinctions and theories allow realistic terminology to be washed cleaned of its realism. Therefore, it is so important to trace the philosophical context along with its assumptions that allow us to recognize the reasons why the new 'realism' lost support in reality, or why it is not really realism. The new realism determines the field of enquiries for ontology; there is still room for reality in ontology, but only as an instance of possibility (up to Wolff). Later, possibility becomes the only reality, in which the fact that reality is possibility and not real being, will be the most important. Then, in a peculiar way, ontology becomes divorced from metaphysics. The clearest sign of this tendency will be that traditional metaphysical terminology disappears, and the object takes of the place of being and reality. This will be, as it were, a new incarnation of the ontology that separated knowledge from real being.

Each stage in the history of philosophy where there is a departure from knowledge of reality, whether in the name of the concept of being, of essence, or of the object, is celebrated as another step forward and as proof of the development of philosophy. Yet, it is truly an expression of how philosophy has lost its main task that the ancient creators, the Greek thinkers, set for philosophy in the framework of the civilization they created. Thus, philosophy does not develop, but the name philosophy is all that is left, just as the term reality is left while reality is lost, and the term does not mean 'reality' at all.

Ontology and the Object

In ordinary language, the word 'object' can mean something or anything. In a narrower sense, we may distinguish between an object as something, including animate beings (plants and animals). Especially, though, we may distinguish between an object as something and personal beings, which we do not call 'something,' but 'someone.' We call real things 'objects' when we want to show that something is found in the field of our knowledge, although we do not know precisely what or who it is. Most often, the word object is used for that to which a particular science refers, and so, we speak of the object of a science.

Object: Etymology and Terminology

The word 'object' is a translation of a Greek word (*antikeímenon*) and its Latin counterpart (*obiectum*). It is composed of two parts: before (*anti-*, *ob-*), and thrown, from throw or cast (*keímai, jacere*). An object is something that lies in the way or across from one. It should be emphasized that the Greek term for object was not a technical term that philosophers used, while the word 'subject' may have been a technical term. *Antikeímai* simply meant something on the opposite side, whether literally or in a logical sense (logical opposition), or even metaphorically, as 'laurels' mean honor.[1] The Latin term '*obiectum*' and the English term 'object' are precise translations of the Greek term '*antikeímenon*.'

Today, the word 'object' is almost ubiquitous, and in science, the word is used to describe what a science concerns (the object of a science); but the Greek philosophers did not use the word in this sense. How did they get by? Instead of speaking of an object, they simply mentioned the object: physics is the science about nature, and ethics is the science about morality.[2] The category of the object was not used as a meta-linguistic expression in the theory of science.

There was also no mention of the object of knowledge as that which, in turn, would be found across from, or in the way of, the knowing subject. The problem of knowledge was not yet described in such categories; rather they

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1   *Słownik grecko-polski*, 1:211, s.v. ἀντι-κεῖμαι.
2   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 2n10.

focused on what a particular cognitive power such as the eye or intellect knows.

Terminological changes first appeared because of the Arab philosophers. They used the passive participle *mawdu*—that which has been put, to describe any activity. It is interesting that the term was also used for the word 'subject.' Thus, in Arabic, 'object' and 'subject' were rendered by the same term: '*mawdu*.' For this reason, the Arabs could be speaking not only of the object of science, but also of the subject of science. This Arabic ambiguity in translation was passed on to medieval Latin, in which the word '*subiectum*' could mean both subject and object.[3]

The Christian philosophers then turned to this problem. Scotus said that the matter with which science is concerned could be called the object or the subject, but he regarded object as the better term.[4] In the works of Thomas, the word object most often appears with reference to a faculty (*potentia*) or skill (*habitus*) as something toward which they are directed. Hence, he writes that the proper object of a faculty or skill is one or another thing.[5] Aquinas also introduced a distinction between the formal and the material object.[6]

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3   So it is still, in the English language, in which the word 'subject' may mean a subject or an object.

4   "*Sed loquimur de materia circa quam est scientia, quae dicitur a quibusdam subiectum scientiae, vel magis proprie objectum, sicut et illud circa quod est virtus, dicitur obiectum virtutis proprie, non subiectum*" (But we talk about the matter about which is science, that by some is called subject of science, or more properly the object, similar to virtue; it is properly called the object of virtue, not the subject); Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, quoted in Prologue to vol. 3 of *B. Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera philosophica.*, eds. Giraard J. Etzkorn and Allan B. Wolter (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1997), 3:3; cf. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 2n10. Here it is noteworthy that in the English language, the word 'subject' can appear in the sense of the topic that is being discussed.

5   "*Proprie autem illud assignatur obiectum alicuius potentiae vel habitus, sub cuius ratione omnia referuntur ad potenetiam vel habitum, sicut homo et lapis referuntur ad visum inquantum sunt colorata, unde coloratum est proprium obiectum visus*" (Now properly speaking, the object of a faculty or habit is the thing under the aspect of which all things are referred to that faculty or habit, as man and stone are referred to the faculty of sight in that they are colored.); Aquinas, *ST* I. Q1. Art. 7. resp.

6   "*cuiuslibet cognoscitivi habitus obiectum duo habet, scilicet id quod materialiter cognoscitur, quod est materiale obiectum; et id per quod cognoscitur, quod est formalis ratio obiecti*" The object of every cognitive habit includes two things: first, that which is known materially, and is the material object, so to speak, and, secondly, that whereby it is known, which is the formal aspect of the object); Ibid., II–II. Q1. Art. 1. resp.

An object is something that actualizes potency, and since there are different faculties or powers, there can also be different objects. For example, the good is the object of the will as something at which the will aims, and at the same time it is the end or purpose of the will.[7] Thomas emphasizes that each faculty in a natural way is directed to its proper object.[8] This is because the object means that at which each faculty aims in order to be actualized; that is, in order to be perfected by obtaining the end and object proper to itself. Thus, in Thomas, the concept of the object is not in any special way connected with the order of knowledge, but it applies to everything that is an act in relation to a potency, power, or faculty.

In general, in medieval Latin, '*obiectum*' was used to mean that which any skill or habit concerns, to which any faculty or power refers, because it is something to which they move and which lies across them.

This conception of an object in Latin is in agreement with the meaning of the Greek word. Since science was understood not as a system of propositions, but as a potency or habit (*habitus*), thereby science was also the ability of a cognitive faculty, namely, the intellect, to apprehend the truth. In this context, the object of science is what actualizes our cognitive faculty. The faculty, in turn, can be the subject for its object. The relation of subject and object is, thus, a relation of a potency (the intellect as capable of knowing) to an act (something that is known by the intellect). This was the context in which the term object was brought into philosophy and the theory of science. It was a word that from the point of view of language had a meta-objective character. This means it was the result of intellectual operations that referred not to things but to our acts of knowledge, just as the words 'genus' and 'species' belonged to the group called '*entia rationis*.' If a faculty or potency is directed toward something that is a natural end and act for it, then that end and act can also be called an object, because it lies, as it were, across from the faculty or potency. What lies across from it is the object, which at the moment is connected with the faculty or potency, becomes for it an act. Thus, an object is anything that actualizes a faculty or potency. Our cognitive faculties are such potencies; in themselves, they do not possess a proper object, but they must go out toward the object;

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7 "*Obiectum autem voluntatis est finis et bonum*" (Now the object of the will is the end and the good); ibid., I–II. Q1. Art. 3. resp.; "*obiectum intellectus*" (intellectual object); ibid., Q2. Art. 8. resp.; "*obiectum visus*" (object of sight); ibid., Q1. Art. 1. ad 2.

8 "*Voluntas enim naturaliter tendit in ultimum finem, sicut et quaelibet alia potentia naturaliter operatur ad suum obiectum*" (For the will naturally tends to the ultimate end, just as every other power naturally works to attain its object); Aquinas, *De potentia Dei* [The Power of God], 7th ed. Taurini: Marietti, 1942. OCLC: 175102408. Q10. Art. 2. ad 4.

for example, the eye must go toward color, and hearing must go toward sound. Color actualizes the eye's potency to see, and sound actualizes the ear to hear. When they wanted to describe what such an object and act was for the intellect, then they said that the objects were forms abstracted from phantasms.[9] In this last case, the Aristotelian theory of abstraction appeared; it was supposed to explain what sort of process occurs in human cognitive faculties so that the intellect also (which is in potency to know) could possess its proper object, which is form, but which is not present in the material world in a pure state. So also, as they start from sensory knowledge, cognitive faculties such as the imagination and agent intellect work together to unveil the intelligible form so that it may become the object for the passive intellect, and so may become what that intellect actualizes. The object is the act for the faculties or potencies.

The Object and the Knowledge of Being in Metaphysics

How is this act or object related to metaphysical knowledge? Here, the problem becomes complicated. This is because there is a difference between the intelligible form that corresponds to a thing that belongs to a species, something that can be conceptualized, and a being that is not a species or a genus. On the other hand, is intellectual knowledge limited to the apprehension of specific or generic concepts, or is it open to reality as a whole? The question arises because in our knowledge and in the language that expresses our knowledge, we apprehend not only beings as species or beings as genera, but also precisely as beings, as something beyond species and genera. Even before we recognize a particular affiliation according to species and genus, we already have knowledge of something as something, as a being. This would mean that human intellectual knowledge is not exclusively a product of specific and generic concepts.

Avicenna thought that being was the first object apprehended by the intellect.[10] Likewise, Thomas said, "first our intellect apprehends being."[11]

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9   Aquinas, *Super Boetium de Trinitate Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus* [Commentary on Boethius's Book *On the Trinity*. Commentary on Boethius's Book *On the Trinity*], ed. Ordre des Prêcheurs (Rome, Commissio Leonina, 1992), I, Q1 Art. 3 ad 3.

10   *"Sed in cognitione humana ea, quae prius occurrunt, sunt priora et simpliciora, ut videtur, quia ens est illud quod primo cadit in cognitione humana, ut Avicenna dicit"* (but in human cognition, those things that are first experienced are things prior to others and simpler, as is evident, since being is that of which first the human mind forms a concept, as Avicenna says); ibid., arg. 3.

11   *"Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens, quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu, ut dicitur in K Metaphys. Unde ens est proprium obiectum*

Despite similarities, the way the priority of being in the process of human knowledge was understood among the two authors was different. Avicenna thought that being was the broadest concept, and for this reason, being was apprehended as first, prior to generic and specific concepts. Thomas rejected the possibility that being could be identified with a concept, since a concept contains only the content-related (essential) aspect of being. How, then, could he explain the priority of being in knowledge? He appealed to the priority of act: "This is because everything is knowable insofar as it is in act, of which Aristotle speaks in the *Metaphysics*; hence, being is the proper object of the intellect and it is what is first knowable, just as a sound is what is first audible."[12] Thomas focused primarily not on form as species or form as genus, but on the fact that the intellect is passive, and the object must be an act. The act may be a species or genus, but it may be a being as such, since to be a being is to be in act.[13] The act for a being as a being is existence. Here, we see the difference between Aristotle and Thomas, because for Aristotle form was act. If the form is the act of a being, then the apprehension of being qua being is performed through form apprehended analogically; that is, the form that determines species and genera, and individual being as belonging to a species or genus. Meanwhile, Thomas ascribes the function of the most important act to existence; existence can only be concrete, cannot be conceptualized, and cannot be generalized. The universality of existence is based only on its analogical character, the subject of which is each concrete existence.

Thus, although the answer to the question of what the object of metaphysics is will sound similar in Avicenna and Thomas, being will be understood differently. For Thomas, the way being is understood looks to reality, while for Avicenna, the field is open for shifting the emphasis from being to a concept, because being as the broadest concept is supposed to be object of metaphysics.

As we remember, as soon as ontology appeared, the difference between being and the concept of being was no longer expounded upon, although how being was understood definitely went in the direction of the concept of being. While they considered the difference between actually existing being

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intellectus, et sic primum intelligibile, sicut sonus est primum audibile" (Now the first thing conceived by the intellect is being; because everything is knowable only inasmuch as it is in actuality. Hence, being is the proper object of the intellect, and is primarily intelligible; as sound is that which is primarily audible.); Aquinas, *ST* I. Q5. Art. 2. resp.

12   Ibid.

13   "*Alio modo esse* dicitur actus entis in quantum est ens, idest quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura" (in another way being means the act of a being insofar as it is a being [*actus entis in quantum est ens*], i.e. that by which something is called an actual being in reality); S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*,. IX, q. 2, a. 2.

and possible being, possible being attracted more attention, and existence as such was eventually treated as a mode of essence, and not as the act of an essence. Ontology had as its object the concept of being rather than being as such, and possible being rather than actually existing being.

The presentation of the medieval modification of how an object was understood would be incomplete if we did not consider the theological context. The theological context ultimately influenced how the concept of the object took shape, which would become the inheritance of modern and contemporary philosophy. Despite that the role of theology would eventually be forgotten, without theology, this metamorphosis of the object in philosophy would never have happened.

The discussion among medieval philosophers concerned the mode of divine knowledge. Aristotle thought that God knows only himself, which constitutes a complete identity of subject and object: the world did not come into being, and the world lasts eternally. From a Christian perspective, when the question of creation appeared—how all being comes from God—then the problem of God's knowledge of what he creates had to appear. Here, Scotus's position was crucial for the rise of ontology.

Thomas thought that as God sees himself, he sees all the possibilities of being imitated by what he could create, but this is by seeing himself. Scotus broke this entire process into several phases and factors. God first thinks of his own essence in an absolute sense; that is, only as his essence. Second, God creates something different from himself, such as a stone, but only as something that can be thought; that is, something that is an essence. Third, there is the possibility that the divine intellect could compare itself with anything else that is intelligible, so this is the possibility of producing a certain relation between the intellect and something different from it. Fourth, the intellect can reflect on this relation. At the third and fourth level, where the relation appears, the ob-ject (*ob-iectum*) appears, which is what lies somehow across from God's thought. The objectivism of these ideas is that we can think of them as what has already been thought of by God. The objects are, thus, not already there, things that exist in the world outside of God, but they are thought by God, and they are only thought of. As thought of, they include everything that is possible. The concept of the object for Scotus replaces the concept of ideas; up to that time, ideas were treated primarily as the exemplar causes of what God creates or can create, but here the emphasis has been shifted to the capacity to be thought of, and not the capacity to be created.[14]

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14   Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 415–430.

If the capacity to be thought of in a positive sense is delimited by contradiction, then not only God but human beings as well can think on such a broad scale. Humanity cannot create as God can create, but human beings can think in such a broad range. Thus, it is not strange that when not only being, the thing, but also the idea have been replaced by the object, then the object, having been freed from reality and from the order of creation, because it has been reduced to the order of thought, can fill the field of purely human metaphysics, which becomes ontology. Certain currents of medieval theology are helpful in this, especially that of Scotus, who devalued being, and even ideas, to introduce the object in their place.

The Object Instead of Being: Ontology

Ontology, which in its first phase emerged from metaphysics, as is shown by the appeal to words such as being or reality, enters into a phase in which this appeal to being and to reality becomes less and less needed. This is all the more the case because when they looked at the object of ontology as the concept of what is possible, this seemed to exhaust the scope of ontology, because what more could there be above possible being? In turn, the concept of reality became more and more questionable, and after Kant's critiques, the appeal to reality was treated not only as a philosophical error, but also simply as a philosophical anachronism. Our knowledge, in the light of the views of Kant, is a complicated cognitive construction in which the subject and not reality plays the main role.

Thus, in ontology, on the one hand, we have the complete openness that the concept of possibility offers, while on the other hand, a tendency to depart from reality appears. The question arises: what sense does it make to use the concept of possible being if there is no mention of real being? The ontological attitude in the pre-Kantian period was not anti-realistic. When the concept of reality has been undermined, then the concept of possible being qua being is not needed any more. The field of possibility is filled with new content and metaphysics is replaced by another queen of the sciences.

When Aristotle searched for the first philosophy, he also called it the universal science; that is, a science that differs from the particular sciences.[15] Some twentieth-century philosophers also had the ambition of discovering a universal body of knowledge, but one not burdened by reality. Instead, they resorted to Descartes's and Leibniz's tradition of *mathesis universalis*,

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15   Aristot., *Met.* 1003a 20–33.

where mathematics was in the first position, then logic. From the perspective of mathematics and logic, not from the perspective of metaphysics, they tried to reactivate ontology in the nineteenth century. Since terms such as being or reality had been discredited in a certain way, the question of a new term that would have universal value arose, but for a completely different reason, because they did not look to reality or to metaphysics. The term 'object' turned out to be what they were looking for. The term is universal and they even thought that it was more universal than the word being. In addition, the term was supposed to have the virtue of not being entangled in metaphysical controversies. The philosophizing mathematicians and logicians who decided to cultivate the new ontology focused on the object. We will be able to see how far ontology went beyond not only classical metaphysics, but also modern ontology, when we analyze how recent ontologists have understood the object.

At the beginning, we should note that the introduction of the word 'object' in this new context is distant from the object in the traditional sense understood as an act, a correlate of the potencies of various faculties, and not only the cognitive faculties. It is different from the object as the known thing. Let us recall that something is called an object of knowledge because it is a being and thing that we know. The word 'object' here has a meta-objective meaning. This is because the thing that science studies is secondarily called an object because knowledge concerns it. Being as thing indicates what is known, while object apprehends the thing because it is known. The first refers us to reality, and the second refers us to knowledge.

From the point of view of cognitive realism, the concept of the object is restricted to the being as thing because the concept belongs to knowledge of the second degree; that is, meta-language. So when we say that an object is an object of a science, some sort of consternation must ensue, because here language of the second degree has been reduced to language of the first degree; that is, meta-objective language has been reduced to objective language. In practice this means a reduction of reality to the contents of knowledge. Reality becomes merely an object; that is, a correlate of our knowledge without regard for the relation of the object as such to reality. From the philosophical point of view this means that reality as an object will not possess anything that sets it apart as reality, and the entire field of human knowledge will fall under the one name of object. While the concept of possible being implied a reference both to being (because the word being appears here) and to reality (because possibility somehow suggests reality or actuality, otherwise it would be unnecessary to introduce the concept of possibility), the concept of the object no longer contains such references within itself. The concept of an object is metaphysically neutral.

Kant—The Creation of the Object

It should be emphasized that Kant's philosophy was a crucial milestone for how object has been understood in recent times. This is because Wolff had still defined object in the traditional way. An 'object' is a being (*ens*) toward which our action is directed.[16] Kant connected the concept of the object completely with knowledge without appealing to being (reality). He said that everything of which we are conscious is an object, as it is most broadly understood.[17] It is not hard to see that the object as defined in this way corresponds to the Cartesian definition of an idea.[18] This means that the philosophy of the object as that philosophy was constituted because of Kant is a continuation of the Cartesian philosophy of consciousness, which today is called the philosophy of the subject. Thus, it is not merely a continuation of seventeenth-century ontology. Through the philosophy of consciousness, ontology was reactivated

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16   "*Est nimirum objectum ens, quod terminat actionem agentis, seu in quo actiones agentis terminantur*" (It is without doubt that being is the object, which terminates the action of an agent, or in which the actions of the agent terminate); Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, ps II, Sec. 3, cap. 2, para. 949; "*Quoniam in objecto terminatur actiones agentis, qui circa idem versatur; ex notione objecti alicujus discipline deducendum, quid in ea tractari debeant*" (for the actions of the agent terminate in the object, to which they are directed; from the concept of the object of any discipline one can deduce, about what this discipline should treat); ibid., para. 950. It is hard to agree with Roberto Poli, who thinks that Wolff's ontology is a doctrine about objects in general without regard for their being or non-being; "Ontology is the science of objects in general without considering their *Sein* or *Nichtsein*"; "Twardowski and Wolff," in Paśniczek, *Theories of Objects*, 50. Although Wolff's ontology influenced the rise of the theory of the object, Wolff never defines ontology as the science concerning the object, but the attempt to identify a being, as Wolff speaks of being, with an object is an overreaching interpretation.

17   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 235; cf. Liliana Albertazzi, "*Is there a Transcendental Object?*," in Paśniczek, *Theories of Objects*, 26–44.

18   "Of my thoughts some are, as it were, images of things, and to these alone properly belongs the name IDEA; as when I think [represent to my mind] a man, a chimera, the sky, an angel or God. Others, again, have certain other forms; as when I will, fear, affirm, or deny, I always, indeed, apprehend something as the object of my thought, but I also embrace in thought something more than the representation of the object; and of this class of thoughts some are called volitions or affections, and others judgments"; Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 5.3; quoted in *Discourse on the Method and the Meditations*, trans. John Veitch (New York: Cosimo, 2008), 88. As we see, ideas include both objects of knowledge (immanently present in consciousness) and cognitive or volitional acts; that is, acts of which we are conscious.

in its new form; a typical feature of the new form was that being (the concept of being) was exchanged for the object.

Kant brought an essential innovation with respect to the object, since the object is not only that of which we are aware (that would be an idea in the Cartesian sense), but the object is also co-constituted by us. The object is therefore, not something we find already there in reality so that we can acquire knowledge about it, nor is the object an idea that exists in the human or divine mind, because the object creates our knowledge.

We are not aware of this process, because it has an a priori character. It occurs spontaneously, as it were, and without our will. We can know something as an object because it has been predetermined by the categories of our cognitive faculties, both the senses and the intellect, and those categories do not come from experience.[19] It is completely appropriated by the dimension of knowledge (that which is known is an object), and the known object is not a real object because it is a cognitive construct (it constitutes an a priori synthesis of impressions with subjective categories). Only such a cognitive construct, which is composed on the one hand of sensory mental images, and on the other hand, is composed of a priori categories, is an object.[20]

An object is not an actualization of a faculty of knowledge as a potency, but it is an immanent element of the entire cognitive structure. In this context, the word 'object' takes on a completely new meaning in relation to the traditional conception of the object of human knowledge, both as being and as idea. The question of how the a priori contents are obtained comes to the forefront; the a priori contents are not real, but neither are they purely subjective, because those contents constitute the universal endowment of human cognitive faculties qua human. The object thus understood cannot 'return to reality,' because it creates reality, but it is cognitive reality, not reality that is transcendent to the knowing subject.

When Kant introduced a new conception of the object, he did not intend to make it the object of a new science that would have the object as such as its object.[21] It was still too early, all the more since Kant had the ambition to create a system of metaphysics that would answer the eternal questions concerning God and the soul, and did not intend to build an ontology of the object. For that to happen, the concept of the object would have to be given gradually such a rank that it would become capable of replacing the concept of being.

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19   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B125.

20   Ibid., A103–104, B136–137.

21   In this proposition, two ways of understanding the word 'object' are brought together: that to which knowledge refers, and the concept of the object.

Hegel—Objectivism without Realism

Hegel played an important role in the transformation of being into object. In Hegel's system, an object is a thought. However, this is not a fleeting human and subjective thought, because a thought in the Hegelian sense possesses its own weight. It possesses its own weight because it is an object, and not a subject. Moreover, thought is reality, and what is ordinarily regarded as the real world is only one of the epiphenomena of thought. A thought is objective because it has been thought. A tautology is implied (after a merely terminological difference has been rejected) because knowledge does not go beyond the understood object; knowledge is immanent. The object is constituted in the framework of knowledge. The object is identical with being, and being is identical with the Absolute, but this is in the framework of the process of dialectical development.

This position may have a purely epistemological character, but it may also underlie a new ontology that will no longer look to transcendental reality but will find its support in logic. That ultimately took place in Hegel's case. Hegel explains:

> With these explanations and qualifications, thoughts may be termed Objective Thoughts—among which are also to be included the forms which are more especially discussed in the common logic, where they are usually treated as forms of conscious thought only. Logic therefore, coincides with Metaphysics, the science of things set and held in thoughts—thoughts accredited able to express the essential reality of things.[22]

Since metaphysics as Hegel understood it is concerned not with things but with thoughts about things, metaphysics does not differ from logic. In that case, logic is the foundation of philosophy. This system of logic is objective. Objective thought is thought directed to an object, although the object is only an internal correlate of thought.

The objective thought, according to Hegel, is truth and at the same time is the absolute object.[23] The objective thought must be a truth if the thought and the object are identical and if there is nothing transcendental to thought.

Here we see how different this position is from truth as classically understood, where thought must seek reality in order to be conformed to reality. This is

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22   Hegel, "The Objectivity of Thought," in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences Part One* (1817), §24.

23   Ibid.

because reality is not immanent to thought but is transcendent to it. When reality has been reduced to an object, and an object is an immanent correlate of thought, then truth is in an objective thought; that is, it is in an object that has been thought.

Hegel built his entire system on the basis of the concept of objectivity. This should not confuse us, because objectivity is not being in itself, but is only a correlate of our thinking. Philosophy as a whole is a system whose source is the self correlated with an abstract concept of being, in relation to which reality is only an insignificant epiphenomenon. The self is above all reality. Since thinking constitutes the essence of the self, and thinking is thinking about something, then at that point, the category of the object as that which has been thought of turns out to be very useful. In this way, Hegel could replace the concept of reality with the concept of objectivity. The concept of objectivity cannot not having anything in common with realism since objectivism looks only to the object, not to reality. The object will be an immanent correlate of the thought-self, which in the dialectical process of becoming also establishes reality, which is an object.

Both in Kant's philosophy and in Hegel's system, the object precisely as object takes on a universal significance by filling the sphere of knowledge and consciousness (Kant) or even the sphere of reality (Hegel), but in both cases the object is a projection of the subject.

Meinong: The Theory of the Object Instead of Ontology

In this way, the ground was prepared for the theory of the object; the theory of the object would replace both classical metaphysics and modern ontology. Alexius Meinong was the author who most greatly contributed to the domination of the concept of the object in philosophy. Meinong's views, which were extremely controversial, contributed to a revival of the discussion at the boundaries of ontology and metaphysics, logic and mathematics, and psychology and epistemology.

Meinong had already encountered philosophy at gymnasium (Vienna's Akademisches Gymnasium), since philosophy was on the curriculum of subjects in secondary schools; but at the time, this did not have any great influence on him.[24] When he completed secondary school and became a student of the University of Vienna (1870), he did not take philosophy as his major but

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24   Alexius Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie. Selbstdarstellung* [About Object Theory: A Self-Exposition], ed. Josef M. Werle (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1988).

history, with German philology and law as minors. During his studies, he also became interested in philosophy, and in particular, the two works of Kant, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the *Critique of Practical Reason.*

Franz Brentano was also crucial in Meinong's development. In 1874, Brentano began to lecture at the University of Vienna.[25] Meinong entrusted his philosophical education to Brentano.[26] As a result, he wrote his habilitation dissertation in philosophy, which was on Hume's theory of abstraction and theory of concepts.[27] Meinong's next dissertation was on Hume's theory of relations.[28]

Meinong was not the only great student of Brentano to leave a strong mark on contemporary philosophy. Brentano's students included Kazimierz Twardowski and Edmund Husserl.[29] For them, Brentano was, if not the only window to the history of ancient and medieval philosophy, the main window, since he worked on Aristotle and certain scholastic currents.[30] He worked on

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25 Meinong would lecture at that university for over twenty years (1874–1895) and had an enormous influence on many philosophers of the time; cf. O. Kraus, "Biographical Sketch of Franz Brentano," in *The Philosophy of Brentano*, ed. Linda L. McAlister (London: Duckworth, 1976), 1.

26 "*Ich habe darum Brentano von meinem Entschluße Mitteilung gemacht und mir seine Führung erbeten*" (It is why I informed Brentatno about my decision asking him to guide me); Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 56.

27 Alexius Meinnong, *Hume-Studien: Zur Geschichte und Kritik des modernen Nominalismus. 1, Zur Geschichte und Kritik des modernen Nominalismus* [Hume Studies: History and Criticism of Modern Nationalism. 1. On the History and Criticism of Modern Nominalism] (Wien: Gerold, 1877). OCLC: 630837967.

28 Meinong, *Zur Relationstheorie*, vol. 2 of *Hume-Studien* (Wien: Gerold, 1882).

29 Here we may mention also philosophers such as Carl Stumpf, Anton Marty, Alois Höfler, Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand, Christian von Ehrenfels, A. Berger, Anton Ölzelt-Newin, and Max von Pidoll. Among persons who occupied important positions in public life, we may mention H. Scheller, a leader of the German Catholic modernist movement, and Georg von Hertling, who was the Prime Minister of Bavaria, then the Prime Minister of Prussia and the Chancellor of the German Empire; cf. Kraus, "Biographical Sketch of Franz Brentano," 4–6.

30 Brentano first studied in Munich (1856–1857), then studied for one semester in Würzburg. Later he studied in Berlin (1858–1859), where under the direction of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, he studied Aristotle. He then studied at the Academy of Münster (1850–1860), where, in turn, he studied medieval Aristotelianism. In the year 1862, he received a doctorate at the University of Tübingen, and began theological studies at the Theological Seminary in Würzburg; he completed a habilitation degree at the University of Würzburg on the basis of a work on Aristotle's psychology, the theory of the intellect, and included in this, the theory of God; cf. ibid., 2–4.

them, but was not a specialist, because his picture of Aristotle's philosophy and of the history of philosophy was very simplified, if not distorted.[31]

Above all, Brentano developed the theory of intentionality, which was inspired mainly by the Middle Ages. Brentano's main thesis was that mental experiences differ from physical states because mental experiences are always directed toward an object.[32] This theory, in a special way, inspired his students who developed it in various ways. One of these variations was Meinong's theory of the object.

Meinong answers the question—what is an object?—by saying that everything is an object (*alles ist Gegenstand*).[33] If everything is an object, then no definition of an object can be given, since both the genus and specific difference are objects because they are situated in the concept of everything.[34] In this way, Meinong in his search for a definition of an object encountered the same difficulties that Aristotle had presented when he explained why no definition of being could be formulated: there is no higher genus above being,

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31   Gilson remarks on a widespread but historically inaccurate conception of the four phases of the history of philosophy, which Brentano presented in *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie und ihr augenblicliche*r S*tand* [The Four Stages of Philosophy and Their Transient Status], ed. Oskar Kraus (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1926). Brentano thought that the phases were clearly separate in terms of time; e.g., the theoretical phase, the ethical phase, the skeptical phase, and the mystical phase. Meanwhile, in the thirteenth century we also have the rationalism of Thomas Aquinas, the mysticism of St. Bonaventure and Raymond Lull, and the practical and anti-speculative attitude of the Franciscan masters; cf. Étienne Gilson. "Franz Brentano's Interpretation of Medieval Philosophy." In *The Philosophy of Brentano*, 66.

32   "*Jedes psychische Phänomen ist durch das charakterisiert, was die Scholastiker der Mittelalters die intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes genannt haben, und was wir, obwohl nicht mit ganz unzweideutigen Ausdrücken, die Beziehung auf einem Inhalt, die Richtung auf ein Objekt (worunter hier nicht eine Realität zu verstehen ist), oder die immanente Gegenständlichkeit nennen würden*" (Every psychological phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the middle ages called intentional (or mental) existence of an object, and what we would call, but with some ambiguous expression, relationship to a content, direction toward an object (under which does not have to be understood any reality), or immanent objectness; Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* [Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint], vol. 1, ed. Oskar Kraus (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1925), 124; Herbert Spiegelberg, "'Intention' and 'Intentionality' in the Scholastics, Brentano, and Husserl," in McAllister, *The Philosophy of Brentano*, 120. While there was agreement that the intentionality is typical of mental states, Husserl argued against Brentano's position that all states are intentional; cf. Philip J. Bartok, "Brentano's Intentionality Thesis," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43:4 (2005), 458.

33   Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 68.

34   "*Was zunächst Gegenstand ist, formgerecht zu definieren, dazu fehlt es an genus wie an differentia; denn alles ist Gegenstand*"; ibid.

and a specific difference must be a being, and so, therefore, it could not be a difference.[35] Importantly, Meinong was speaking of an object, not of a being. Although in his cogitations, he did not look directly to Aristotle, we may suppose that the main thrust of his argumentation was drawn from Brentano who took up this problem in a work on the manifold understanding of being in Aristotle.[36]

As the result of his failures in his attempt to define what an object is, Meinong resorted to etymology. He thought that etymology confirms that an object is a correlate of our intentional acts. The German word '*Gegenstehens*' indicates something that stands (*stehens*) against (*gegen*). This would be in agreement with what Brentano said on intentionality, namely, that every mental act has its own object. Thus, the definition of an object should not be based on a genus and a specific difference, but it should be based on the etymology of the German language. Etymology reveals what we know as we experience our mental experiences (*Erlebniss*), and especially elementary (*elementare*) experiences, which always refer to something, to some object. An object is a correlate of mental acts. Such a conception fits in the schema of intentionality that Brentano developed.

Meinong tried to make a deeper analysis of the object to reach certain solutions. We express the conception of an object with the words and propositions of our speech. An expression (*Ausdruck*) possesses a meaning (*Bedeutung*), and this meaning is in each case an object. Every body of knowledge deals with objects.[37] He tried to connect knowledge with the object as that toward which an act of knowledge (a mental experience) is directed with meaning, and he identified an object with a meaning. As a result, the object can be wherever there is any sort of meaning.

At this point, it becomes clear that Meinong was not interested in being qua being or reality qua reality; he was satisfied with the level of meaning alone. The difference between what is real and unreal, between what exists in itself and what we can only think about, was pushed to the background. Respect for this difference was not a philosophical problem for Meinong; on the contrary, he tried to eliminate this difference in order to reduce everything to meaning. And if everything is reduced to meaning, everything is reduced to an object.

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35   Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, 224–226.

36   Franz C. Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* [The Manifold Meaning of Being According to Aristotle]. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1862. OCLC: 11928695.

37   "*Auch alles Wissen hat es demgemäß natürlich mit Gegenständen zu tun*" (All knowledge has accordingly naturally to do with objects); Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 68.

Meinong thought that science could not be limited only to what is real. Science should include all the objects that appear in our consciousness. According to Meinong, the point is that there has not been any science concerning many groups of objects up to that point because the sciences only studied what was real; i.e., they seek knowledge of reality (*Erkenntnis des Wirklichen*).[38] Reality determines the limit of knowledge. Yet, he argues, the unreal (*seiendes Unwirkliches*), nothingness (*Nichtseiendes*), possibility (*Mögliches*), and impossibility (*Unmögliches*) can also constitute objects of knowledge.[39] Therefore, a new science is needed that will study all objects because our acts of knowledge refer to them. Since those acts can refer to anything regardless of any concrete instance of their existence (*Fall ihres Daseins*), objects that are simply free of existence (*Daseinsfrei*) will be of this sort. In this way, Meinong presented a description of the object with the help of the most powerful metaphysical thesis: the object's connection with existence has no significance for the object. Meinong's theory of the object (*Gegenstandstheorie*) is a science concerning objects as such or concerning pure objects free of existence.[40]

As we can see, in these lines of thought, not only is there a key difference between metaphysics and ontology, but something more that goes beyond the limits of ontology, and whereby Meinong's theory of the object claims to become a science higher than ontology. When it is a question of metaphysics, it is rejected along with the thesis that the theory of the object does not take into consideration the reality of a thing, including a thing's existence. The main postulate of the theory of the object is simply that the object is deprived of existence. The reason for this is that existence limits the scope of the application of the concept of the object only to what really exists. Therefore, the object must be 'free from existence.'

Let us note that this position is even stronger than many previous ontologies that were open to what is possible, but with the emphatic provision that what is real is also included in it.[41] Possibility was not brought into opposition

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38   "*Aber große und wichtige Gruppen von Gegenständen haben in den traditionellen Wissenschaften keine Heimat gefunden*"; (But big and important groups of objects did not find any place in the traditional sciences); ibid.

39   ibid.

40   Ibid.

41   We should emphasize that in modern ontologies, there was no anti-realist attitude, so if the accent was on essence, it was with the idea that an essence could come into existence. In Meinong's case, existence is not merely a neutral question, but it is a question or matter that is also, in a certain sense, treated as a postulate: an object is supposed to be free of existence.

to reality. There is a definitive break from the reality of the object, because the object, in order to be an object, must be free from existence. It would be difficult for it to be real if it did not possess existence.

This is still not the end of the matter. Meinong wanted to go beyond ontology in yet another way. In its previous form (with the exception of Clauberg's position), ontology had its limit, and that was non-contradiction. Meinong proposed that the theory of the object should include not only what is possible and non-contradictory, but also what is impossible and what is contradictory. As a result, the theory of the object can have as an object what is non-contradictory and what is contradictory, what is possible and what is impossible. For this reason also, Meinong believed, it is the most universal of all the sciences because it is impossible to go any further.[42]

At first glance, this theory cannot be refuted by saying that it concerns what is unreal, because it supposed to concern what is unreal; it cannot be accused of affirming contradiction, because it affirms contradiction. Here, more questions arise. Can the theory of the object be held as a theory? Can the category of a contradictory object that would be something more than a cluster of two names be upheld? What should be done with metaphysics and with the reality that the theory of the object includes, but which it covers in an indistinguishable way; that is, in a way that does not allow us to refer to reality as reality?[43]

The attempt to reduce contradiction to human knowledge is nothing new, since Aristotle had analyzed this question when he engaged in polemics with the sophists. Rather, we should be surprised that Meinong did not take this into consideration at all; that is, he did not answer Aristotle's arguments, as if he simply did not know them. This is a possibility considering the fact that Meinong's studies in philosophy were selective and in a rather late period. Yet this was the first thing that Bertrand Russell noticed when he criticized Meinong's views: a thought that breaks the principle of non-contradiction destroys itself.[44] It is worth remembering the main line of Aristotle's argumentation.

First, any formulation of an objection against the principle of non-contradiction must also affirm this principle in the objection because it is

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42   "*Uniwirkliches, überdies Nichtseiendes, Mögliches und selbst Unmögliches den Gegenstand von Erkentnissen ausmachen kann*" (Unreal, moreover nonbeing, possible and impossible can be the object of knowledge); ibid., 68.

43   This would be possible if an appeal could be made to existence, but objects qua objects are supposed to be free of existence.

44   Jocelyn Benoist, *Représentations sans objet aux origines de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique* [Representations without an Object as the Sources of Phenomenology and Analytic Philosophy] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 133.

stating precisely this (the principle of non-contradiction is not binding) and not something else. The principle of non-contradiction cannot be refuted without acknowledging it in the refutation, which either states something or denies something. The same principle cannot at the same time be refuted and not refuted.

Second, the principle of non-contradiction as a fundamental principle cannot be demonstrated, because doing so would be to make the error of arguing in a vicious circle. This principle cannot be demonstrated, but at the same time it is assumed or implied in all demonstrations, which should indicate that it is one of the first principles.

Third, we can formulate a contradictory proposition, but we cannot nurture a contradictory thought if we understand what contradiction is, because contradiction occurs when one thing excludes the other. There is no contradictory being because something cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same respect.[45]

Is there perhaps a contradictory object, since we can say contradictory propositions and understand something through it, even if one excludes the other? The very expression contradictory object implies an affirmation of the principle of non-contradiction: an object; that is, something that is not a non-object, and contradiction, which we distinguish from non-contradiction.

What exactly did Meinong understand by a contradictory object? First, we should look to the difference that he introduced between an 'object' and an 'objective.' Objects are meanings of names, while objectives are meanings of propositions. Meinong emphasized that an object and an objective were two different things. This observation is right in every respect, but in such a case, if we can speak of contradiction, it is in relation to objectives, and not in relation to objects. This is because contradiction is not a property of a name or the meaning of a name, but of a proposition or judgment when I assert or deny something. Assertion and denial appear not at the level of names but of judgments. By the same token, contradiction cannot be the property of an object, but at most of an objective in the sense that contradiction can appear only at the level of the objective; that is, the meaning of a proposition, or a judgment. Thus, even if the word object will be treated in a broader sense that includes the meaning of a name and the meaning of a proposition, then contradiction must still be limited to objectives. There are no contradictory objects because that is not the right category of statements for contradiction.

The problem of contradictory objectives; that is, the meaning of propositions, remains. We cannot deny that we understand contradictory propositions,

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45   Aristot., *Met.* 1006a 35–1012b 34.

and that when they are apprehended in a non-psychological way they possess their own meaning, which is contradiction. Does this mean that a new super-ontological sphere then appears—some sort of new kind of objective? That would be a misunderstanding, because the contradiction of a proposition does not constitute any sort of new order. A contradictory proposition possesses its own structure, and in that structure we should distinguish between the syntactic level, the semantic level, and the pragmatic level. On the syntactic level, there appears a negation referred to an element of the proposition that also appears in the same proposition without negation: John is a man, and John is not a man, or John is and is not a man. Such a proposition can be constructed without a problem and it will be a correctly constructed proposition from the grammatical point of view. On the semantic level, we consider the meaning; that is, what we want to say about John, namely, that he is and is not a man. We understand that, at the same time, we are ascribing and denying that he is a man. At the pragmatic level, when we are already referring a judgment to reality, we are aware that the judgment has already been revoked on the cognitive level. As Russell said, contradiction contains self-liquidation. It is one thing to understand a contradictory judgment, and it is another thing to treat it in the function of a judgment, as what we want to refer to in reality to see whether the thought we hold is true. Meanwhile, a contradiction, or a contradictory judgment, has nothing to refer to reality, because before the reference it destroys what would be referred. Thus, we should distinguish a contradictory judgment from a judgment as judging; that is, an act of referring the content of a judgment to reality or to any state of things, even a purely imaginary and intentional state (a work of art).

As soon as a contradictory judgment is understood, we also understand that, in a cognitive sense, this judgment has only a negative meaning: it cannot be predicated of any state of things, whether real or imaginary and intentional. Each of these states implies its own identity (the principle of identity), and what follows from this is that each state rejects the absence of identity (the principle of non-contradiction). Thus, Meinong did not distinguish between the level of the understanding of a contradictory judgment and its designate, which is absent.

Understanding treated as an objective (or understanding in an objectivized sense) is not a judgment as a judgment; that is, an act of referring the contents of a judgment to a state of affairs. An objective cannot be a judgment in a strict sense. An objective is the content of a judgment, even a contradictory judgment, insofar as the content is understood. After understanding, the content becomes empty, because it undergoes self-liquidation: what it was supposed to assert was denied. It cannot be referred in a positive sense to anything.

The content of a judgment as an objective can be referred to a state of affairs even if we know that such a state of affairs is not so; that is, if we know that the judgment is always false.

How does a contradictory judgment arise? First of all, in a formal sense the judgment is composed of two judgments, each of which taken separately is not contradictory ('John is and is not a man' = 'John is a man' and 'John is not a man'). A contradictory judgment is a secondary construction in relation to non-contradictory judgments. We do not begin our knowledge from contradictory judgments but from judgments that imply an affirmation of the principle of identity and non-contradiction. A composite contradictory judgment is a construction based on two non-contradictory judgments. Such a construction can be made primarily for syntactic reasons that allow not only names but also propositions to be joined and divided. It is also possible at the semantic level, but without any designate, because the meaning of a contradictory judgment eliminates its own designate. At the semantic level, we can understand the meaning of a contradictory judgment, and as we understand its meaning we also understand that the judgment does not have a designate. The understanding of a contradictory judgment is the result of the composition of the two judgments that compose it but do not compose one designate.

A contradictory judgment is not autonomous, both on account of its components and on account of concomitant reflection, which rejects such a judgment as a judgment in a cognitive sense. Contradiction cannot be isolated from the context of a mode of knowledge, as if it could be given a new ontological or supra-ontological dimension. A contradictory objective (or the meaning of a proposition-judgment) hangs upon non-contradictory judgments, and the clash of two non-contradictory judgments in such a way that they would form a contradiction is the result of human intellectual operations, and only the result of those operations. The table of possible contradictions is based on non-contradictory judgments, which on the basis of the principle of non-contradiction we encounter as contradictory. This is a secondary encounter in relation to the originally affirmed principle of identity and non-contradiction. Nonetheless, the affirmation of these principles does not preclude the possibility of constructing contradictory propositions or judgments. Such statements can be constructed so we can show ourselves that contradiction has no designate. It is one thing to construct a contradictory proposition, and it is another thing to affirm a contradictory designate, which Meinong called an object. There are no contradictory objects, whether in a real sense or in an intentional sense. When we say that a contradictory judgment is understood by us, that understanding is based on our understanding of the component

judgments and on our understanding of denial, the effect of which is that there is no possibility of passing to any sort of designate and object. A contradictory judgment is a complex syntactic-semantic structure that cannot be reduced to an object as its designate, even in an intentional sense. All the more, a contradictory judgment will not possess such a designate in reality.

Meinong was not intrigued by reality but by objects that could be investigated scientifically although they were not real, including nothingness. The problem with this is that Meinong's approach raises doubts. It is not true that 'objects' of the sort that Meinong mentions (unreal objects, nothingness, possibility, impossibility) were not studied by science. Metaphysics as it is classically understood, including Aristotle's metaphysics, studied them. It was a question of the status of those objects. They were not treated as things in themselves, as of equal rank to reality and being. They appear secondarily on account of the original apprehension of being qua being. The objects that Meinong mentioned do not lie on the side of reality (because they cannot for various reasons), nor are those objects original in our cognitive apprehensions. Instead, they are some form of negation of positively apprehended being qua being, or of being as known. That negation is not present in reality, but it is the result of human cognitive acts at the meta-objective level. This is because when we speak of non-being, this implies a primitive reference to being, just as when we speak of non-reality or impossibility, this implies a prior apprehension of reality and possibility.[46]

As soon as Meinong considered only the intentionality of our knowledge, the result had to be that the difference was blurred between what is real and what is only thought of, just as the secondary status of negation in relation to affirmation, and the concept of non-being as secondary to the concept of being were blurred. Here, we are dealing with the blurring of the difference between objective and meta-objective language, if being and non-being are put on the same level.

Meinong's approach could contribute to the rise of new sciences, but the first procedure, which equates in some way the real with the unreal is a metaphysical procedure; but this is not merely a question of a naïve approach to

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46   Aristotle emphasizes precisely this point at the beginning of Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, where he describes the object of first philosophy as being, and then as substance, and at the same time considers the negative aspect of the domination of being: "or negations of one of these things or substance itself. It is for this reason that we speak of non-being that it is non-being" (1003b 9–11). Non-being negates being and therefore, we cannot speak of non-being without reference to non-being or use 'ontic' or 'entitative' terminology at all.

human knowledge and the realism of human knowledge. If this is metaphysics, what sort of metaphysical qualifications did Meinong possess to perform such a procedure? This is a very important matter, and it is easy to move over this matter to the daily order. Meinong spoke of real being and looked to the performance of what Husserl called *epoché*; that is, the liberation of content from existence.

Do we have the right to ask how Meinong, and later Husserl, understood real being not only in terms of common sense, but in a technical or metaphysical sense? What is the structure of real being? How are content and existence related to each other? These are strictly metaphysical problems that can only be properly analyzed in metaphysics. Meanwhile, both authors quickly pass over this question, so that after performing a reduction they can analyze the object. After the reduction, it is no longer a real being; moreover, there is no return to that being. Therefore, we must raise the question again: What does Meinong understand by real being as possessing existence, from which he decided to depart in his philosophy? Did he have a developed theory of such being and if so, in the framework of which science? This is because his theory of the object is not suited to it as a matter of principle.

What sort of science eliminates existence? If we keep in view two and a half millennia of the history of metaphysics, we cannot perform such an act as an act that is intelligible in itself, because it is not intelligible. The act cannot be performed within the framework of the theory of the object, because the theory of the object includes what has already been deprived of existence. This must be performed within the framework of some other science, but what science? Only metaphysics comes into play, because only metaphysics investigates real being.

Meinong did not construct his own system of metaphysics and he did not investigate the status of existence in real being. How then could he deprive the being-object of existence? This is impossible. The mental shortcut that leads to the declaration that we are investigating objects as objects; that is, as what is freed from existence, is illegitimate from the philosophical point of view if the process has first been performed in metaphysics.

The next problem appears here. After the procedure of separating existence from the object, there is no longer any return to the object as being. That road is closed, because the reality of being is not caused by arbitrarily adding existence to a content. Real being is what is already there and what is affirmed by us in its existence, and not made by us. Meinong, who was not a metaphysician, did not see those problems. For him, it was a secondary problem because the most important matter was the scientific investigation of objects, not of real being. In what domain would we study being as real? The theory of

the object certainly does not lend itself to this. How can the derivative character of negative concepts be determined if the concept of reality has been neutralized? This is impossible. There is no return from Meinong's theory of the object to metaphysics, and from the philosophical and methodological point of view it is questionable whether there is any way out.

Metaphysics was not a problem for Meinong; on the contrary, he was concerned with freeing objects from existence. Thus, as he continued his reflections, he explained that part of the theory that he called the theory of the object was developed in pure logic, and in his own time, it was developed primarily in logistics. The other parts, in his opinion, had been studied since early times in metaphysics, and especially in ontology treated as a division of metaphysics, although they did not always emphasize the significance of independence from their existence.[47]

As we can see, in his reflections, Meinong went in exactly the opposite direction from what took place in metaphysics. In metaphysics, they wanted to know reality even if there were different concepts of reality. But here, the most important thing was the separation of knowledge from reality, since reality stands on the path of knowledge of the object as object. On the other hand, since Meinong did not consider (or rather did not know) the context of the controversy over the status of existence in reference to possible being as that controversy took place between Scotus and Thomas, he was unable to see that even if real existence was disconnected from what is possible, it was mainly for theological reasons, to show the infinite power of God as the Creator. This is because the main question of metaphysics was the question of being. For this reason, they looked for various answers, among which arose even essence in itself (as *tertia natura*). Meanwhile, Meinong by himself took credit for investigating the object as an end in itself (*als Selbstzweck*); that is, as an object that is independent of real existence. At that point, he made himself part of the essentialist current in philosophy (Avicenna, Scotus, Suárez), but without the precise distinctions those philosophers made. When Meinong includes what is contradictory as an object, he was continuing Clauberg's thought that had already appeared in ontology.

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47 "*Von alters her hat man auch unter dem Namen der Metaphysik und wohl insbesondere der Ontologie als eines Teils der Metaphysik gegenstandstheoretische Dinge behandelt, und speziell das charakteristische Moment der Daseinsfreiheit durchaus nicht immer verkannt*"; (From a long time the so called metaphysics and especially ontology understood as a part of metaphysics concerning a theory of the object, and especially with its characteristic moment as existentially neutral was not always thoroughly recognized.) Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 69.

Meinong said that objects as such cannot possess existence in a sense proper to themselves.[48] With this remark, he entered the territory of metaphysics. Indeed, how could one describe what existence is in the framework of the theory of the object that, on principle, is free of existence (*Daseinsfrei*)? The existential aspect is not located in the framework of the theory of the object, on principle as it were. Meinong first would have had to construct a system of metaphysics for the use of his theory of the object, just as in modern times, ontology was derived from metaphysics; that is, from the theory of real being, in order to move on to the theory of possible being. When an object that is free of existence is the starting point and the formal object of the science of the object, there is no way to determine scientifically (philosophically) what sort of existence is involved, or what sort of existence it is that the object is free of.

The appeal here to common-sense knowledge is illusory because existence constitutes the formal object of the investigation of being precisely in metaphysics. If Meinong's theory of the object is the first philosophy, and that which is free of existence is the object, then we do not know what it means to be free of existence, since existence falls outside the orbit of the theory. All the more, it does not mean much to say that objects possess some sort of existence proper to themselves, because where does a typology of existences appear in the theory of the object? The theory of the object is not derived from an investigation of existence, but as we have seen, there is no way to escape from existence. Moreover the declaration of the triumph of the science concerning objects free of existence, at the cost of metaphysics, not to mention ontology, seems to be a procedure that confirms that Meinong was not aware of the operation of a metaphysical character that he undertook when he 'freed' the object from existence, and on the other hand, when he ascribed to the object some sort of existence proper to the object. The second procedure is dictated by the need to save the object for knowledge, because if somehow the object did not exist, then it could not appear at all as an object. But then the question remains: how can the theory of the object investigate existence, not only the type of existence peculiar to the object, but the existence of being, real existence?

The determination of the status of the existence of anything is not within the scope of the theory of the object. So what science then provides the

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48   *"Natürlich bedeutet diese Daseinsfreiheit aber nicht, daß Gegenständen als solchen Existenz im eigentlichsten Sinne etwa überhaupt nich zukommen könnte"* (Of course, this freedom of existence [existential neutrality] does not mean that existence in a most proper [real] sense cannot inher in all objects.); ibid.

framework wherein Meinong considers existence—what sort of existence it is, what it belongs to, and how it will be put to use in the theory of the object? Meinong does not possess such knowledge and simply does not know it, because only in the framework of metaphysics can being be investigated as really existing, and only in metaphysics can the status of the existence of each being be determined, along with the object, and it is due to metaphysics that we can move to being apprehended in certain aspects for the use of other sciences. One cannot simply decree as Meinong did that we are freeing the object from existence, because such a decree does not have philosophical force; it is an arbitrary decree, only seemingly evident.

To summarize, the theory of the object cannot be a first philosophy. On the contrary, if the way is prepared for the theory of the object as the first science, this is connected with the elimination, first of metaphysics (the theory of real being), then of ontology (the theory of possible being), but the theory of the object as a science is not capable of doing this. The opening of the object to contents of any sort to which mental experiences are directed, including what is contradictory, is a cognitively secondary procedure. This is because this object from the philosophical point of view is a certain construct, because how otherwise could it be called the removal of real existence from real being so that the effect of the operation would become an object free of existence (*Daseinsfrei*). There is no doubt that such an object is not cognitively original, since its rise is preceded by procedures of a metaphysical and ontological character. To free the object from existence, we must first affirm this existence, and then interpret it. This is what metaphysics considers.

Meinong passes over the elimination of existence to the daily order. Moreover, his purpose is to overstep metaphysics. Yet the operation of the neutralization of existence is also a metaphysical and methodological problem, and it is of the highest importance, since here a crucial question is formulated: what is being? It is a metaphysical problem because it is a question of the competence of a particular domain in performing certain cognitive operations on the object of knowledge. The liberation of what Meinong called the object from existence cannot lie within the purview of his theory of the object. Such an operation may seem to be legitimate but it is not, since it is a thoroughly metaphysical operation.

This hole in Meinong's system can be seen in the example of how he rejected non-contradiction as a principle without which there would be no object, because this principle is ultimately based on existence. Therefore, without existence, it does not seem so difficult to neutralize the contradiction and to treat a contradictory object as an object. However, without existence, there would be no being. In such a case, if we consider the binding power of the

principle of non-contradiction, it is necessary to consider the connection of the principle with existence.

Thomas stated this as if written in stone: existence and non-existence are the furthest limits of contradiction.[49] In connection with this, Krąpiec writes:

> The concept of being in the existential apprehension constitutes the foundation of the most important of all oppositions: contradiction. This is because contradiction concerns being and non-being in the sense of absolute negation as the scope or denotation and as the content of being.... Because existence, which underlies all acts of being, is what gives realism to the concept of being, then contradiction as the negation of being fundamentally and first of all concerns being in the existential sense; that is, existence, and then only in a more remote sense, by virtue of consequence, it concerns what is connected with that existence.[50]

Therefore, existence constitutes the ultimate foundation for the binding power of the principle of non-contradiction; this principle is the most powerful principle, and it refers precisely to existence. Something cannot at the same time exist and not exist. When this principle is shifted to the level of essence (substance, content), then being can be made from non-being, because non-being is a concept, and somehow we can understand non-being.[51] However, existence is the fundamental reason for being, and the principle of non-contradiction is based on existence. Thus, this principle cannot in any way be overstepped to arrive at the idea of non-being. The idea of non-being will always be secondary to the idea of being, or to put it more precisely, it will always be secondary to being understood existentially. Then also, non-being remains non-being qua non-being, and not as a variety of being or object, and the principle of non-contradiction must still be in force. Finally, if being is replaced by the object, and object is raised above existence, then we arrive at a paradoxical situation

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49   "*esse et non esse sunt extrema contradictionis*" (Being and non-being are the extremes of a contradiction); Aquinas, *De Quat.* cap. 4; quoted in Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu* [The Theory of the Analogy of Being], 2nd ed. rev. (Lublin, Red. Wydawnictw KUL, 1993), 61. Of interest in this matter, it is to be noted that while Krąpiec attributed this to Thomas Aquinas, others have attributed it to a Thomist named Thomas of Sutton, an English Dominican doctor of theology and an early Thomist. While the authorship has apparently disputed, the actual content of the text is apparently not in dispute. A full copy of the Latin text can be found online, accessed September 24, 2016, http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/xp4.html.

50   Ibid.

51   Ibid.

in which being and non-being are objects of thought of equal rank. Meinong said that non-being is the best object of thought.[52] Of course, he could say this, but if we come to such extremes, then we must pose a rather scholastic question: what sort of being, and what sort of non-being? They are being and non-being understood as objects. However, being is something more than an object, and non-being negatively is something more than the correlate of the opposition for being as an object.

When Meinong freed the object from real existence, and thereby departed from real being, he had to encompass the plurality of various objects and ascribe to them new states of existence for which he had to find a new terminology.[53] Besides existence (*Existenz*), the state (*Bestand*) appears which includes what is not real. The sun exists but equality as an ideal object cannot exist; it can only endure (*bestehen*). Also, the existence that any objective or object of thought (content of judgment) possesses does not exist, but only endures (*bestehen*). Existing duration (*bestehen*), and not-Bestehendes also do not exist.[54] The introduction of a new word (*bestehen*) means a passage from existential language to essentialistic language.

Meinong considered the difference between what something is (*Sosein*) and existence. He even gives an example: to say that a great sphere of uranium is heavy and round is not the same as saying that the sphere exists.[55]

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52   Objectives not only have being, but are beings in the broad sense of the word. They differ from the other objects because they belong to one of the members of a contradiction as an assertion (*Position*) or a negation (*Negation*). Meinong says that non-being is a *Positum* that is just as good, or even better, than being. Non-being is also positive as a being in the sense that they reflect each other; cf. Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 72–73.

53   Meinong lists four main classes of objects corresponding to the fundamental mental experiences. These are as follows: representations (*Vorstellen*), the object of which are objects (*Objekte*); thoughts (*Denken*), the object of which are objectives (*Objektive*); feelings (*Fühlen*), the object of which are dignities (*Dignitative*); and desires, the object of which is what is desired (*Desiderative*). The dignities contain a triad—the true, the good, and the beautiful—while what is desired contain obligation and end-purpose. The objects form an hierarchy from the simplest to the increasing complex, just as tones created melody by composition; and so here, we have complexes of objects that are correlative to each other. Because simple objects are the starting point, absolute relativism is ruled out. Correlates (*Relate*) and compositions or complexes (*Komplexe*) taken as objects can be called ideal correlates (*Idealrelate*) and ideal complexes (*Idealkomplexe*) as opposed to real correlates (*Realrelaten*), and real compositions (*Realkomplexen*); ibid., 70–76.

54   "*Existierendes besteht auch, nicht Bestehendes existiert auch nicht*" (What exists, also persists, what does not persist, also does not exist); ibid., 74.

55   Jan Faye, Uwe Scheffler, and Max Urchs, "Philosophical Entities. An Introduction," in *Things, Facts and Events*, ed. Faye, Scheffler, and Urchs (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 12–13.

However, this does not prevent existence from being pushed to the background, and nature-essence from being brought to the foreground so that some other state of existence may be ascribed to nature-essence. It is clear that Meinong here encountered an old problem that the essentialist current in philosophy had encountered (Avicenna, Scotus) in which essence, liberated from existence or neutral to existence as a third nature, still somehow exists, since it constitutes an object of knowledge. Therefore, for Meinong as well, objects and objectives, although they do not exist, have a certain nature (*Sosein*), which is independent of existence and non-existence. It does not matter that this nature does not exist, but it is enough that it endures (*bestehen*) above existence or non-existence, because what is most important is the content contained in the nature, a cognitively rich content, a content that constitutes an object of scientific knowledge, including philosophical knowledge.

Meinong's theory of the object is a consequence of the ontologization and essentialization of the metaphysical problematic, and therefore, in the framework of ontology it is not easy to argue against this theory, since it also tempts us somehow to lift it to the level of the object, which the principle of non-contradiction does not bind, and which is beyond existence. In the metaphysics of real being, this theory is untenable because it is ultimately based on the assumed principle of existential reductionism, which is performed in a methodologically erroneous way, since the theory of the object is not in a position to apprehend real being precisely as really existing. However, in the purely essential order, Meinong's theory of the object, especially on account of the reduction of existence, becomes prone to lead itself to absurdity by accepting the contradictory object.

Moreover, we cannot say that Meinong was completely original, and when he is said to be completely original, it is because someone does not have sufficient knowledge of medieval metaphysics and seventeenth-century ontology. Despite many applications in contemporary logic and mathematics, and despite its influence on Husserl's phenomenology, the theory of the object cannot replace metaphysics, and even when it illegitimately enters the territory of metaphysics, it must leave the field open to investigate being as really existing.

Intentionality: Outside of Reality

Meinong's theory of the object (in which he speaks of objects that are not only deprived of any reference to reality, but also of impossible or even contradictory objects), was for Husserl an example of the result of paradox of intentional objects.[1] In the transformation of ontology into the theory of the object, the theory of intentionality started by Franz Brentano played a crucial role. Although that theory had roots reaching back to the medieval tradition, the problem had already been posed by Plato.[2] In contemporary philosophy, the theory took on new significance and began to perform another role.

Intentionality: The Etymology of the Word

What is intentionality? First we should focus on the etymology of the word 'intention.' In ordinary language, the word means a determination to do something or a desire. We speak of evil or good intentions. They play an important role in the moral order, since we often remark that good intentions are most important, whether our action turns out well or badly.[3] In Latin, whence the word comes, the original meaning was different. There, the term meant tension. Only later did it acquire metaphorical meanings such as growth, enlargement, intention (in the ordinary sense), desire, concern, and even the premise in a syllogism. The verb '*intendere*' means to stretch, to tighten, just as '*tendere*' by itself means to stretch, to tighten, to spread, but also to be directed, to go, and to head somewhere.[4] The word 'tendency,' in turn, has kept this meaning.

As for the Latin etymology, Thomas wrote about the meaning of the word '*intentio*' in the expression '*in aliquid tendere*'; that is, to move or aspire toward something. The motion of that which is moved and the motion of that which

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1   Benoist, *Représentations sans objet aux origines de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique*, 9.

2   *Sophist*, 262 E; *Republic* v, 476 E; *Symposium* 199 D, and elsewhere.

3   The mistake in this line of reasoning, or, properly speaking, this type of rational justification, is that a decision that is merely an intention but is already a resolution has been ignored. The decision or resolution is the fundamental moral being. Man is morally responsible not for intentions, but decisions that he makes.

4   *Słownik łacińsko-polski*, 3:215–216, s.v. *in-tendō, -ere*; 5:354, s.v. *tendō, -ere*.

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causes movement both aspire to something. In the functional sense, that which imparts movement is most important, because it causes something to be moved to an end. In the case of human beings, the will is this first principle of movement to an end, and so, an intention first of all pertains to the will.[5] Therefore, on the basis of the etymology connected with the metaphysical understanding of motion, intention was connected most of all with the will, and not with knowledge.

The core of the word 'intention' is the Indo-European root *ten-*, meaning extension.[6] An intention would thus contain a certain relation between two terms, but a relation such that one term is directed and in a certain way gravitates towards the other, although the relation is not necessarily reflexive.

Theological Context

The word '*intentio*' appeared in the work of Augustine of Hippo in a particular meaning concerning the Holy Trinity, where it was used to bring the mystery of the dogma closer to us; it looks to an analogy between the unity of the many elements that are present in human knowledge and the Holy Trinity. In sensory knowledge, there is the known thing (*ipsa res*), the act of seeing (*visio*), and the intention (*animi intentio*). The '*animi intentio*' is the act of the mind as it connects the known object with the faculty of knowledge.[7] The mind directs attention to an object. The intention constitutes a kind of power that unites two elements: the known object, and the faculty of knowledge, in which vision that is a reflection of the image of the thing occurs in the faculty of knowledge. As a result, those elements, although they are different, form a unity whereby human perception occurs, which is the perception of something by someone. But they and the object are not sufficient for vision to occur, the intention is needed; that is, the directing of attention to the object, and this is the work of the mind.[8] Augustine also spoke of the 'intention of the will' (*intentio*

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5   Aquinas, *ST* i–ii, Q 12, Art. 1, co.

6   Calvin Watkins, Ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, 2nd ed. rev. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 90, s.v. intention.

7   Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate libri quindecim* [Trinity. Fifteen Books], lib. xi, cap. 2, 2; quoted in *Patrologia Latina* [The Latin Patrology], vol. 42, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1886), col. 986.

8   "*Haec igitur tria, corpus quod videtur, et ipsa visio, et quae utrumque coniungit intentio, manifesta sunt ad dignoscendum, non solum propter propria singulorum, verum etiam propter differentiam naturarum*" (in these three, then, body, vision, and that which joins them together, intention, is there not only an evident distinction, but also a diverse nature); ibid. "*tria haec*

voluntatis), which connects the known object with the act of knowing, and it also connects the image of the object preserved in memory with the image that vision acquires during cognition. Then the unity of the three elements occurs.[9]

Specifically, we can try to understand the Holy Trinity as the unity of the three persons by an analogy to the *intentio* present at the level of intellectual knowledge, by which three elements (act, object, and intention) form a unity. Therefore, God, in the Christian conception, can be treated as one God but in three persons, where the Divine Persons could be thought of by way of an analogy with human knowledge; that is, composed of three elements that nevertheless form a unity. The dogma of the Holy Trinity is thus a doctrine of faith, which is considered to be 'true' by virtue of an act of will, but which we do not need to accept completely blindly because, to a certain degree, it can be understood by the intellect.

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  quamvis diversa natura, quemadmodum in quamdam unitatem contemperentur memineri-mus; id est, species corporis quae videtur, et eius imago impressa sensui quod est visio sensusve formatus, et voluntas animi quae rei sensibili sensum admovet, in eoque ipsam visionem tenet" (the case then being so, let us remember how these three things, although diverse in nature, are tempered together into a kind of unity; that is, the form of the body which is seen, and the image of it impressed on the senses, which is vision or sense informed, and the will of the soul which applies the sense to the sensible thing, and retains the vision itself in it); ibid., cap. 5, 2, col. 988.

9 "*Quod ergo est ad corporis sensum aliquod corpus in loco; hoc est ad animi aciem similitudo corporis in memoria; et quod est aspicientis visio ad eam speciem corporis ex qua sensus for-matur; hoc est visio cogitantis ad imaginem corporis in memoria constitutam ex qua formatur acies animi; et quod est intentio voluntatis ad corpus visum visionemque copulandam, ut fiat ibi quaedam unitas trium, quamvis eorum sit diversa natura; hoc est eadem voluntatis intentio ad copulandam imaginem corporis quae est in memoria, et visionem cogitantis, id est, formam quam cepit acies animi rediens ad memoriam; ut fiat et hic quaedam unitas ex tribus, non iam naturae diversitate discretis, sed unius eiusdemque substantiae; quia hoc totum intus est, et totum unus animus*" (What then a body in place is to the bodily sense, that, the similitude of a body in memory is to the eye of the mind; and what the vision of one who looks at a thing is to that appearance of the body from which the sense is informed, that, the vision of a concipient is to the image of the body established in the memory, from which the eye of the mind is informed; and what the intention of the will is towards a body seen and the vision to be combined with it, in order that a certain unity of three things may therein take place, although their nature is diverse, that, the same intention of the will is towards combining the image of the body which is in the memory, and the vision of the concipient, that is, the form which the eye of the mind has taken in returning to the memory, in order that here too, a cer-tain unity may take place of three things, not now distinguished by diversity of nature, but of one and the same substance; because this whole is within, and the whole is one mind.); ibid., cap. 4, 7, col. 990.

In those theological analyses, Augustine said that acts of knowledge and love are by their nature intentional; that is, they refer to something. Here, it turns out that intentionality should not always have as its object something that is real. It can refer to objects that are only present in our consciousness as recalled, imagined, or thought of.

The Philosophical Context

The Greek counterpart for the Latin word '*intentio*' is '*éntasis*,' which means tension.[10] In architecture, the term referred to the curvature of a column that departed from the perpendicular for visual reasons (a straight column appears concave to the eye), but also because the greatest tension was at a certain point (at the height of one third from the bottom), and so, the column had to be made thicker to strengthen it. The Stoics' '*éntasis*' referred to the medium between the seen object and the eye. Chrysippus appealed to such a medium when he tried to explain how the act of vision occurs. The perceived object was not sufficient, nor was the faculty of perception alone (the sensory organ), because the perceived object in some way had to come in contact with the faculty that apprehended it; *éntasis* was the medium whereby the object was impressed into knowing organ. The problem of intentionality in the metaphysical aspect was present in pre-Socratic philosophy, although the word itself (*éntasis*) did not appear in this context. If intentionality is connected with human knowledge, then the question arises of the ontological status of what is known. Parmenides thought that one can think only of what is. Thus, if we think of something, it must be a being, non-being cannot be thought of at all. In this conception, intentions are only of real beings.

We can also interpret the position of Protagoras along the same lines. Protagoras thought that we could not acknowledge anything that did not exist, because if we acknowledge something, then it already exists.[11] There is strong intentionality when only being is regarded as the object of mental acts; by the same token, if something is an object of intellectual knowledge, it is a being. The opposite view would be that the correlates of our cognitive acts do not exist apart from those acts. If we know something, then the object of knowledge does not exist apart from knowing. That would be what Berkeley's position would mean; that is, *esse = percipi*. In both cases, the misunderstanding has its source in a view of the structure and object of the cognitive act.

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10   *Słownik grecko-polski*, 2:152, s.v. ἔν-τασις (*éntasis*).
11   Plat., *Theat.* 167a.

In an epistemological sense, the theory of intentionality has its source in Aristotle's anthropology. Aristotle analyzes the faculties of sensory knowledge and remarked on how they were ordered (as potencies) to their objects (acts). A cognitive faculty is thus entirely directed to being actualized by its proper object, which in a certain way is in the knower. However, the primary and original status of the object in the knower is such that the object is not what is known, but it is that through which we know.[12]

The problem of the kinds or genera of things we know was considered with precision in Arab philosophy. In the Arabic language, an 'intention' is called '*ma'na*,' which means a meaning, an idea, a concept, and a content. Avicenna introduced a distinction that would be very important for medieval philosophy. He distinguished between *intentiones primae* (first intentions) and *intentiones secundae* (second intentions). First intentions refer to things as objects of knowledge, whereas second intentions have as their object universals such as genera or species, which are studied by logic.[13]

To summarize, the intentionality of knowledge can be treated very strongly, and then every object of thought is a real being (Parmenides), or it can be understood weakly, and all objects of thought are only intentional (Berkeley); it can be understood moderately, and then certain objects of thought are real (they exist independently of being known by us), while others do not need to be real (recollections, mental images). On the basis of the same object, knowledge be directed to it or can be directed to a universal that mediates in our knowledge of real things. Under the influence of Suárez, and later Descartes, the intentionality directed to things was lost, and so, not only were universals emphasized, but so were the transparent media as proper objects of knowledge. Brentano subscribed to the latter line of thought; he thought that this conception in general was typical of scholasticism as a whole.

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12   Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 418a 4–6, 424a 15; cf. Maria Pía Chirinos, *Intencionalidad y verdad en el juicio.* [Intentionality and Truth on Trial] (Pamplona: EUNSA, 1994), 50.

13   "*Subiectum vero logicae, sicut scisti, sunt intentiones intellectae secundo, quae apponuntur intentionibus intellectis primo, secundum hoc quod per eas pervenitur de cognitio ad incognitum, non inquantum ipsae sunt intellectae et habent esse intelligibile, quod esse nullo modo pendet ex materia, vel pendet ex materia, sed non corporea*" (the subject of logic, as you know, are second intentions of the intellect, which are in opposition to first intentions of the intellect, because they allow the passage from what is known to unknown, not that they themselves are known and have intelligible existence, but because they do not depend upon matter, or come from matter, but are incorporeal; cf. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, I, cap. 2, A 10, 73–A 11, 75; cf. Spiegelberg, "Intention" and "Intentionality," 110–111.

Brentano abandoned the concept of objectivity for the sake of intentionality. As a result, at the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of intentionality became intriguing again. At the same time, the analyses of the problem were separated in different ways from the fundamental connection between intentionality and cognitive realism. This connection dropped to the background in relation to attempts to make intentionality independent and to separate intentionality from its essential and primary connection with real being. Brentano connected intentionality with the human psyche; the acts of the human psyche are by their nature directed to something (or intentional), unlike physical phenomena that do not possess such properties. Brentano thought that the objects of our intentions have a special mode of existence independently of the things to which the intentions correspond in reality. Here, Brentano gave equal consideration to real objects and ideal or imaginary objects.[14] In the conception of the problem of intentionality, there was a shift in the emphasis from real being to the object as intentional: real being is not the main source or cause that actualizes our mental acts, but it is only one object among others. In this way, intentionality remains at the same level as what in the tradition of Scotus, Suárez, and Descartes was called *esse obiectivum*, and so, objective but not necessarily real existence.

Brentano's student, Husserl, took this path when he constructed the entire system called phenomenology. In his analyses of intentionality he arrived at transcendental idealism.[15] He thought that intentionality did not connect us with the real world, whereby we could know reality, but instead, performed a constructive, creative, and constitutive function in relation to the known object. It synthesized impressions that came from the world, which were only a certain kind of matter. Matter and meaning are provided by form, and intention is form. Even the subject was constituted by intentionality, because intentionality created the unity of the mind. Among intentions, Husserl made a distinction between the object and the content, and the content was the broader concept, because an object does not correspond to every content. He rejected both psychologism (which reduced the content of the object to a mental phenonemon) and ontology (in which various realities were constructed on the basis of intentional objects; for example, Meinong). He even thought that intentionality was also constituted.

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14   Spiegelberg, "Intention" and "Intentionality," 120–121; Pía Chirinos, *Intencionalidad y verdad en el juicio*, 55–57.

15   S. Judycki, "Intencjonalnoś"[Intentionality]. In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 4:890–892; cf. Chudy, "Intencja," ibid., 4:887–890.

Intentionality in Husserl's conception destroyed the possibility of using a realistic concept of the object and subject, because the object and subject are special constructs. In that approach we can see a very strong reference to Kant's philosophy, according to which the object of knowledge and the knowing subject form a special a priori synthesis (or construction). On the basis of Husserl's starting point, it would be difficult to construct a realistic theory of intentionality, even with an anti-idealistic attitude (Ingarden), but at most the problem can be left open, but the most important matter is lost: intentionality as a way of opening human beings to reality, and not only as a way of opening human beings to noemata (the perceived qua perceived), from which there is no passage to reality as reality. This is because it is not enough to say that reality could correspond to the contents toward which our intentions are directed. In such a conception, reality is only a possible being, and it is still not a real being. This is because even if it is real, we treat it as a possible being. What could indicate the reality of a being at the level of noemata; that is, at the level of certain contents? At the level of contents, nothing could indicate the reality of a being. Meanwhile, contact with being qua being, as real and as existing is a crucial matter for metaphysics and for human knowledge. A shift of the center of gravity to noemata radically influenced a change in how the philosophical problem was understood as a problem connected with being, and not only with cognitive contents.

The approach taken in the framework of analytic philosophy takes us even further from reality. Intentionality is considered from the point of view of language. According to W.V.O. Quine, intentionality is a feature of propositions that refer (an intention) to other propositions. Roderick Chisholm also connects intentionality with a proposition, and intentional propositions are not necessarily connected with truth and falsehood, and thereby with reality. It is not human mental (cognitive and moral) act, but propositions that are intentional in the primary sense.[16] In this way, we would make intentionality even more distant from reality. Yet propositions outside anyone's capability of understanding them are only collections of scrawled lines, but if we move to the semantic level (to judgments), then we are dealing with a variety of essentialism.

Meanwhile, the problem of intentionality, as Krąpiec remarks, grows at its source in the context of the knowledge of being. This does not mean that each intentional act has a correlate that exists, and so, it does not mean that everything that is part of our process of knowing is real. If, however, at the starting point of our enquiries on intentionality, we lose the primary and original

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16   Chudy, see this Chapter n15.

connection of intentionality with being, then we have no possibility of returning to being, or of showing the full metaphysical meaning of intentionality.

Human knowledge, which is a light that allows the activation of other spheres of human personal life, both higher life (the will), and lower life (the emotions), is awakened under the influence of existing being. Human knowledge as such is an activity derived from the human being as existing. Existing being lies on both sides, as a subject (human beings) and as an object (that which is known) by the sources of intentionality. Thus, Jacques Maritain rightly describes intentionality as the 'contact of two existences.' When we analyze intentionality, we can go back to the ultimate reasons that provide rational justification for it. Human knowledge is not an activity suspended in a vacuum; it is not consciousness in itself; it is not merely the act of a mind, but it is the act of a living and existing subject—human beings.

Human existence includes the entire human being, because anything that is a human being is a being insofar as it exists. On the other hand, the being that can constitute the object of our knowledge is being because it exists; existence causes a being (proportional to its essence) to be real.

Knowledge is not only an operation of a specific faculty (the mind), but it is also a mode of existence, because human being qua human being exists according to the mode of knowledge. Existence has its subject in the human spirit, and the human spirit is expressed in immaterial spiritual acts; those acts are acts of knowledge or love. Knowledge is an act, and as an act it implies a reference to the first being in the order of being, which is the act of existence. As an act, knowledge is an act and operation; it possesses two features: it is directed to something (intentionality), and it needs an act that is an object, which actualizes it. Existence, the first act, in the object is that which actualizes the object. Thus, in knowledge, the existing subject has a special contact with the existing object; the contact is special because it happens in a human way. This contact is made possible by a special openness of the human spirit because of the spirit's immateriality. This allows the human spirit to reach reality in itself without disturbing reality, since interiorization; that is, the appropriation of a known being, does not happen in a physical way. It is not enough here to consider knowledge (or intentionality) only in the aspect of content. This would mean an a priori acceptance of one or another form of idealism, including pantheism. Existence makes human beings' cognitive situation real, and at the same time makes it concrete. It also shows the contingency and imperfection of humanity and of known being. In this context, the need for human culture arises; culture becomes not only the completion of nature, because that would be insufficient, but also becomes the completion of the human being in the aspect of essence and existence. Being constitutes

the beginning, leaven, and inspiration for the development of personal life in human beings, and at the same time, it directs human attention to discover real perfection, which is a perfect and absolute being. The way of culture cannot run beside or contrary to religion.

Precisely because contingent being is not able to fill human openness, human beings, by a winding road as it were, through constructs of culture, complete what is lacking not only in real being (which is the domain of industry, craftsmanship, and technology), but also what is lacking because our being is open more widely than can be filled by known being called the world. Human beings are open to perfection; at the same time, it must be real perfection, and not only at the level of thought (a perfection that is merely mental and lacking real existence, is not perfect).

Intentionality at its source shows the openness of the human spirit to reality; through reality perfection follows, and the enrichment of the subject, who of itself does not possess any previously inscribed contents. By nature, as it were, human beings are open in a dynamic way; that is, in a way directed to reality. This is intentionality in its function of perfecting humanity. Through culture, human beings are separated from reality (they perform operations on signs), but they are separated in order to return to being; this is possible only by keeping analogical and metaphysical knowledge. Culture cannot be separated from metaphysics. If we are speaking of intentionality and making distinctions, we cannot forget analogy and the major analogate. In this case, it is the contact of two existences whereby our spirit is awakened to personal life and is fertilized with reality, and only then upon this background does it resonate creatively. Intentionality allows us to reach the reason for reality, existence, and in this, human beings' actual cognitive transcendence, which is a feature of what is spiritual, is also expressed.

Meanwhile, at its starting point, ontology holds that the correlates of our intentions are not existing things, but immanent contents of consciousness. Post-Kantian phenomenology goes even further: not only are those contents a cognitive construction, but intentionality itself is such a construction. In both conceptions, the main meaning of intentionality disappears, which is the openness of the human spirit to reality, so that the human spirit can interiorize this reality and in the framework of reality it can determine the direction of personal development. In the case of the post-Kantian theories, a tendency appears to replace being with noemata, which are subjective constructs. This leads to the replacement of the transcendental attributes of being by values.

The analysis of intentionality shows that mental acts, including cognitive acts, are directed toward an object. The object does not need to be anything real, because the contents of our consciousness may just as well be objects.

On the other hand, the object is set in opposition to content, especially in polemics with psychologism.[17] Those contents, although they did not need to have any real counterpart, possessed the feature of objectivity, which was expressed in a necessary endowment of objectivity, in the possession of what is essence. The color yellow possesses features of yellow not only as a real color, but also as an imagined color.

Frege played an important role in overcoming psychologism. He made a distinction between meaning and object.[18] The point was that various contents could refer to the same object. According to Frege, content is something between the thing and the representation of the thing. The content is not subjective, but belongs to the ideal sphere; it is objective and unreal.[19] It is the universe of pre-existing objects that can be known.[20] Mathematics is a special case of the departure from psychologism; in mathematics, numerical relations cannot be interpreted according to the model of mental associations, as John Stuart Mill suggested.[21]

The problem of the object arose for the contents of our representations because it turned out that although not all representations refer to real objects, they do refer to some sort of object. Bernard Bolzano said that we cannot say that a representation has no object, but only that a representation has no real object. It has an object, although the object does not really exist.[22] Bolzano tried to separate semantics from being and ontology, and thereby an autonomous space was supposed to arise that would be a non-ontological antechamber for ontology. Representations that had no real being would be found in the antechamber.

Kazimierz Twardowski was more deeply rooted in the history of philosophy than were Bolzano and Frege. He wrote his doctoral thesis on Descartes.[23]

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17   David F. Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 101–168.

18   Gottlob Frege. "Sens i znaczenie" [Sense and Meaning], in *Pisma semantyczne* [Semantic Writings], trans. Bogusław Wolniewicz (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977), 60–88. This text was published for the first time in 1892 as "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" [On Sense and Meaning], *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (1892): 25–50.

19   Benoist, *Représentations sans objet aux origines de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique*, 49.

20   Ibid., 66.

21   Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, 102.

22   Benoist, *Représentations sans objet aux origines de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique*, 24–26.

23   Ibid., 93.

Thereby, he encountered the Suárezian version of scholasticism, in which the sphere connected with the sphere of the *conceptus obiectivus* was singled out; the *conceptus obiectivus* became the object as a *medium quod*.[24] Twardowski's philosophical formation started from Descartes and passed through Clauberg, Leibniz, and Wolff, up to Kant.[25]

Twardowski presented his views on the difference between the content and the object of representations in his dissertation, which has become part of the literature and is cited as one of those that have influenced the formation of the contemporary conception of intentionality.[26] Unlike Suárez, Twardowski thought that the name 'being' can also describe chimeras and fictional entities. In connection with this, he mentions three types of representations without an object: the negation of every object (nothingness), the contradictory content (the square circle), and something that no one has yet experienced. Ultimately, the definition of the object is restricted in what is non-contradictory. This is therefore, a return to Scotist positions, and it is a rejection of Meinong's position.

Frege criticized Hussserl's dissertation on the philosophy of arithmetic (*Philosophie der Arithmetik*) with the objection that it represented psychologism,[27] Coming to agree with Frege, Husserl, in his *Logical Investigations*, said farewell to psychologism and said that every representation refers to some sort of object, even though the object does not need to designate something that really exists. The object is a state of affairs to which even the most absurd proposition may refer.[28] The object of a judgment is this state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*), and at that level, we do not consider existence, but duration (*bestehen*).[29] Husserl rejected the 'double object' of which Twardowski spoke, and as a result, the difference between a fictitious object and a real object was blurred. This is because Husserl rejected the quality of representation; we apprehend the same type of object regardless whether it has a real counterpart. We know only one object, and that is the immanent object, which we do not apprehend as the representation of some other object, and which would be a real object. In this context, Husserl also rejected the double modality of existence found in

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24   Ibid., 90–94.

25   Ibid., 93.

26   K. Twardowski, "O treści i przedmiocie przedstawienia" [On the Content and Object of Representation], trans. I. Dąmbska, in *Wybrane pisma filozoficzne* [Selected Philosophical Writings] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965), 3–91.

27   Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, 103.

28   Ibid., 176–177.

29   Ibid., 178.

Twardowski; that modality is different in the case of real being, and different in the case of the representation. There are not two objects, one of which I would know, and the second of which would be an object in itself; I know one object, which exists or does not exist.

According to Husserl, an intentional object is independent of real existence, and the difference between an intentional and a real object is purely logical. If it is an object, then it exists, but that is an intentional existence, and it has no further significance for the object as known. Husserl identified concepts such as object, existing object, true, real, and proper. Existence is a modality of an object, just as for Avicenna it was a modality of essence. Husserl was close to such a position because, for him, what constitutes an object is its identity. That identity may be perfect or assumed (for example, culture, or, the identity of Zeus). Mathematics is based on the axiomatic method on the basis of assumed existence. Ultimately, to be a being is to be something. In the apprehension of something, there must be an apprehension of its existence, because we know an object that exists. If it did not exist, we would not apprehend it. Since we are moving about here at the level of intentionality, and not at the level of reality, intentionality has its ultimate base in ideality. In this way, realism is eliminated: there is intentionality and ideality, but there is no realism.[30]

To summarize, on the basis of Brentano's reactivation of intentionality, realism was rejected. The main reason for this was the direct or indirect influence of Avicenna, Scotus, and Suárez on the philosophical formation of the authors discussed here. The *conceptus obiectivus* performs a key role. It is the known content or object, and it is different from really existing being. The treatment of existence as a modality also plays a key role; existence is not treated as an act, or existence is even completely overlooked and is neutralized in favor of essence. For metaphysics, such an approach is hard to accept precisely because the philosophers mentioned did not push to the back the ontological burden of being that really exists, and which is not merely a known content. Although possible and impossible worlds opened before then, they lost the real world as real, but they did not feel the loss.

Here we must discover metaphysics directed to really existing being; really existing being is not considered in Meinong's theory of the object, in Frege's

30   Husserl did not consider to what extent his conception of intentionality was derived from the scholastic tradition of the Scotist line, but Heidegger was aware of this; cf. O. Pontoglio. "La dottrina scotista dell'intenzionalità nell'interpretazione di M. Heidegger" [Heidegger's Interpretation of the Doctrine of Intentionality in John Duns Scotus], Congressus Scotisticus Internationalis. *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*: *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, 652–657.

philosophy of mathematics, or in Husserl's phenomenology. We can recognize what sort of metaphysical and epistemological fractures appeared in their system when we investigate the history of philosophical controversies, whether between Aristotle and Plato, or between Scotus and Thomas. We should then emphasize that the renaissance of many currents of contemporary philosophy built on the reactivated concept of intentionality presupposed certain ontological and epistemological solutions that are in conflict with metaphysical knowledge.

Ontology and the Subject

With the rise of ontology, the first thing that happens is that being gives up its place to the concept of being, and then the object appears in competition both to being and to the concept of being. On the other hand, there is the process of replacing substance with subject. In the Aristotelian tradition, subject was one of the names that meant substance, but in the case of ontology, that change has a deeper foundation and introduces a new perspective of philosophical thought; the crowning point is the 'philosophy of the subject.' It is a matter of an attempt to form a new version of metaphysics, for which the most adequate form of representation will be a system. This is because, in philosophy treated as a system, the first place is assigned to the subject. The subject appears here in a completely different role from the subject as substance as in the Aristotelian system. Moreover, although it is rather generally thought that Descartes was the father of the philosophy of the subject, in a strict sense, Descartes has been constantly located in the Platonic-Scotist tradition, and the real milestone occurred first in Kant's philosophy. It was Kant who introduced a new understanding of the subject and thereby opened the way for the systems of German idealism.

Subject: Etymology of the Word

How is the word subject (*hypokeímenon*) most often understood today? When we think or speak of a subject, we primarily think of human beings, beings capable of thinking and making decisions; that is, rational and free beings. In this sense, a subject differs from mere objects and things. A subject also differs from the world of animals; while we do not call animals, things or objects, we do not call them subjects. Human beings are primarily subjects, and since they are subjects, they cannot be treated as mere things or objects. This is how it is understood today, but the way to this was rather long and complicated.

Like the word 'object,' the word 'subject' is a literal translation of the Greek word '*hypokeímenon*,' and the corresponding Latin term '*subjectum*.'[1] The word indicates what was thrown (*keimai, jacere*) under something (*hypo, sub*), and

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1 *Słownik grecko-polski*, 4:449, s.v. ὑποκείμενον (*hypokéimenon*; subject); *Słownik łacińsko-polski*, 4:244, s.v. *subjectum*.

what as a result of this lies under something and is a foundation (*substantia*, *hypostasis*). This etymological analysis of the word subject appeals to the imagination, but in philosophy it had a very subtle meaning, especially when it took on a technical meaning.

The Subject in Metaphysics

Aristotle connected the word 'subject' (*hypokeímenon*) with one of the meanings of the word 'substance' (*ousía*). The word 'substance' as a key metaphysical concept has many aspects, and these are rendered by various terms. It may be substance as form, when we indicate substance as the reason for the identity of a being, or, it may be substance as essence, when we want to present a definition. It may be substance as nature, when we indicate a source of action, and finally, it may be substance as subject. In the last case, we should distinguish between the logical context and the purely metaphysical context. In a logical sense, the subject is something of which the other categories are predicated, and it, as such, is no longer predicated of anything.[2] Logical predication is derived from the real relations that metaphysics studies. In this case, the subject of predication corresponds to substance, and the predicates are accidents. Thus, the subject from the metaphysical point of view is a certain aspect of the substance, to the extent that accidents, or simply properties, stand in relation to it.

In the *Metaphysics*, predication is understood in a real sense as determination, while the subject is what is determined by something else.[3] Accidents come into play here; they add definite contents to what underlies them, as it were, although this cannot be understood too literally (in terms of layers).[4] If, by 'substance,' we understand this to be a concrete being, then this being

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2 Aristot., *Cat.* 2a–4b.

3 Aristot., *Met.* 1028b 33–1029a 36.

4 David Hume criticized the concept of substance according to the idea of substance that he possessed and on the basis of the theory of knowledge that he possessed; that theory did not allow him to go beyond nominalism and sensualism. Therefore, for him, substance could only be a "collection of simple ideas ... united by the imagination"; that is, they arise from an "impression of reflection"; *A Treatise of Human Nature. Volume 1*, reprinted from the original edition in 3 vols., ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), 1, 1, 1, 6. Aristotle's solution can be reduced to this: do not assume a priori that man knows the world only by isolated senses, since at the starting point, the world that surrounds us shows itself as intelligible and integral in sensory-intellectual knowledge. It is precisely in this knowledge that not only colors, but also concrete beings, which are properly called substances, appear. Aristotle's

is determined by various properties. Socrates is a concrete human being and substance, who, by learning, has acquired the ability to play the flute, or, who has been burned by the sun. These properties determine a substance, can be predicated of a substance (Socrates is a musician, Socrates has been burned), and therefore, the substance is the subject for these properties.

That is not the end of the matter, because, when Aristotle considers the relation of determination to what is determined, he uses that relation by analogy to analyze substance as such and the internal structure of being. Here, as it turns out, in the structure of a being, the form is that which determines, and matter is what is determined; matter is understood as pure potentiality, which thereby becomes the first subject.[5] The subject thus understood is the weakest form of being, because it designates completely undetermined matter. On this account, matter as the first subject cannot be regarded as substance in the leading sense.

To summarize, the Aristotelian conception of the subject has a clearly analogical character. Two planes appear here, the logical and the metaphysical. The metaphysical plane indicates what is successively the substrate for various determinations, whether as sub-element of being (prime matter), or as an independent concrete thing (substance as *tode ti*) for properties. We are on the logical plane when, in the structure of being, something is found that cannot occur in the role of a predicate, but of which everything is predicated.

If we consider that the metaphysical analysis of substance (*ousía*) as the subject leads to prime matter, Aristotle abandons that aspect of substance and seeks more important analogues at the level of the identity of being and the correlate of scientific knowledge. This leads him to discover essence (*to ti en einai*) as the primary analogy for understanding substance.

As a result, the subject played an important role in Aristotle's logic, but not in his metaphysics, where it was obscured by essence. So it was also in medieval philosophy, where the word 'subject' not only was not in competition with the word 'substance,' but moreover, it was under the influence of Arabic translations. As we may recall, it was used interchangeably with the word 'object,' where the passive participle *mawdu* was used both a subject and an object. It was likewise in medieval Latin: the term '*subiectum*' could indicate both a subject and an object. Also, the word was not used very often.

So it is in Thomas, in whose works '*subiectum*' appears rarely and can mean either an object of knowledge, or an object (topic) of science, or a subject for

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analyses in the *Metaphysics* were unknown to Hume, and Aristotle's name is not mentioned once in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, where Hume criticized the concept of substance.

5   Aristot., *Met.* 1028b 33–1029a 36.

properties. It can mean an object of knowledge when the difference between the act of knowing what is material and the act of knowing what is immaterial is explained. With regard to what is material, we must use abstraction; that is, certain elements should be left aside, while in the case of immaterial beings we do not leave aside anything (we do not abstract), because, in their entirety, they are knowable, while matter in itself is unknowable and therefore, abstraction must be used.[6] In turn, in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the word '*subiectum*' appears several times as the object of science (*subiectum huius scientiae*). Another time, Thomas speaks of a subject, following Aristotle, as that in which in some way accidents are found, and it is not necessarily a question of a human subject here.[7] Thus, a *subiectum* is either an object of knowledge, an object of science, or an object for properties. It is interesting that Thomas prefers to use the word '*obiectum*,' which definitely appears more often in his works than the word '*subiectum*.'[8] This may be connected with the fact that basically the Latin translation of the Greek term as substance literally means a foundation, and in this sense, it also includes the meaning that the word '*subiectum*' contains, which does not differ greatly in meaning from substance. A foundation and a subject mean the same thing; they indicate their role in relation to accidents, while they are not accidents. The two terms also appear in conjunction with the Aristotelian definition of '*ousía*' that we find in the *Categories*: it is that which neither can be predicated of a subject nor what is found

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6   "*Ad tertium dicendum quod ad perfectam operationem intellectus requiritur quidem abstractio ab hoc corruptibili corpore, quod aggravat animam, non autem a corpore spirituali, quod erit totaliter spiritui subiectum, de quo in tertia parte huius operis dicetur*" (The perfect operation of the intellect requires indeed that the intellect be abstracted from this corruptible body which weighs upon the soul; but not from the spiritual body, which will be wholly subject to the spirit. On this point we shall treat in the Third Part of this work); Aquinas, *ST* I–II, Q4. Art. 6, ad 3.

7   "*Ad tertium dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, accidens dicitur accidenti accidere propter convenientiam in subiecto. Sed hoc contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, secundum quod duo accidentia comparantur ad unum subiectum absque aliquo ordine, sicut album et musicum et Socratem. Alio modo, cum aliquo ordine, puta quia subiectum recipit unum accidens alio mediante, sicut corpus recipit colorem mediante superficie*" (As stated above (ad 2), an accident is said to be the accident of an accident, from the fact that they meet in the same subject. But this happens in two ways. First, in so far as two accidents are both related to the same subject, without any relation to one another; as whiteness and the art of music in Socrates. Secondly, when such accidents are related to one another; as when the subject receives one accident by means of the other; for instance, a body receives color by means of its surface.); *ST* I–II, Q7. Art. 1 ad 3.

8   For example, in *ST* I–II, *subjectum* appears only twice, while *objectum* appears more than a dozen times.

in a subject.[9] The difference appears when '*ousía*' is translated as *essentia*, because then it is no longer a question of accidents, but of the most important element of being, as the element that stands in relation to a definition.[10] In the metaphysical and theological tradition, which had more respect for Aristotle's tradition and for the translation of '*ousía*' as *essentia*, there was no reason to make subject the primary designate of *ousía*.

Where the approach was more logic oriented—that is, in the nominalist tradition that formed modern thought—*ousía* as substance prevailed. That approach also influenced courses at universities and gymnasia, so that, as a result, not only the Latin '*subiectum*' but also its counterparts in national languages were almost identical (Fr. *sujet*, Grm. *Subjekt*, Eng. *subject*).

The luminaries of modern philosophy such as Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Leibniz were influenced by the scholastic tradition. They did not speak of *ousía* as *essentia*, nor of a subject in today's meaning, which refers only to a personal being. A subject is constantly understood, in according with the logical nominalist exposition, as that of which predication is made, and which is not predicated of anything else.

From Descartes to Leibniz

In his *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes used the French word 'sujet' most often to mean a topic or question.[11] In the *Meditations*, the Latin term '*subiectum*' appears only twice, once to mean an object of thought, and once to mean a subject of properties.[12] John Locke used the English word 'subject' in the sense

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9   Aristot., *Cat.* 2 a; cf. Courtine. *Les catégories de l'être.* [Categories of Being] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 21.

10   We should remember that Boethius, in his translation of Aristot., *Cat.*, renders οὐσία as *substantia*, which is in agreement with the definition presented there; but in the case of theological treatises, he always used the Latin word '*essentia.*' As it happened, because the logical works of Aristotle had been made accessible to the Latin West earlier, οὐσία as substance acquired the predominant position; Courtine, *Les catégories de l'être*, 34.

11   As a grammatical subject: "*Je sais combien nous sommes sujets à nous méprendre*" (I know how very liable we are to delusion in what relates to ourselves); cf. Descartes, *Discourse de la methode pour bien conduire sa raison, et chercher la verite dans les sciences*, ed. Victor Cousin (Paris. 1824), 1. As a question regarding the meaning of topic: "*et ici, m'étendant sur le sujet de la lumière*" (And, making a digression at this stage on the subject of light); ibid., 5.

12   "*Aliae verò alias quasdam preaterea formas habent: ut, cùm volo, cùm timeo, cùm affirmo, cùm nego, semper quidem aliquam rem ut subjectum meae cogitationis apprehendo*" (But

of an object or topic.[13] David Hume did the same.[14] In Spinoza's *Ethica ordine geometrica demonstrata*, the word '*subjectum*' does not appear even once.[15] Leibniz's *Monadology* much more often looks to the word 'substance' than to the word 'subject' (*sujet*), and the latter term ultimately appears in the meaning of a topic; that is, an object of thought, and also as meaning that of which something is predicated; it was also sometimes identified with substance treated generally, or substance as an enduring foundation.[16]

Among the philosophers mentioned, we do not see any tendency to prefer the word 'subject' to 'substance' to show by subject some sort of new content that would show the difference between the old and the new way of philosophical thought. It can only be noted that in Leibniz's *Monadology*, every substance is a subject, to speak in today's language, because every monad as a substance knows and possesses self-consciousness. Leibniz, for his part, retained the word 'substance.'

Kant—Creator of the Philosophy of the Subject

Who was the first to explicitly connect the word '*subject*' with knowledge, thought, reflection, and will? That philosopher was Immanuel Kant. It is from

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other thoughts possess other forms as well. For example in willing, fearing, approving, denying, though I always perceive something as the subject of the action of my mind); Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia* [Meditations on First Philosophy] (1441), III.5; "*nec potest calor in subjectum quod priùs non calebat induci*" (*Aliae verò alias quasdam praeterea formas habent: ut, cùm volo, cùm timeo, cùm affirmo, cùm nego, semper quidem aliquam rem ut subjectum meae cogitationis apprehendo*) (heat can only be produced in a subject in which it did not previously exist); ibid., III.14.

13 As a topic that he discusses: "were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this Essay, I should tell thee, that five six friends meeting a my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this"; John Locke, "Epistle to the Reader," in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690); as an object: "and this is enough for a man who professes no more than to lay down candidly and freely his own conjectures, concerning a subject lying somewhat in the dark, without any other design than an unbiased inquiry after truth"; ibid., Chap. 3.

14 As a topic: "they regard human nature as a subject of speculation"; David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, Sec. 1.

15 Benedict Spinoza. *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, ed. Giovanni Gentile (Bari: Laterza, 1915).

16 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology*, trans. Robert Latta (1898; original French, *La Monadologie*, 1714); *Subject* as the subject of change (para. 10); as a foundation (para. 48); as the subject of a king (ibid.).

Kant that the philosophy of the subject begins in a literal sense. This is because when one is speaking of the philosophy of the subject, the point is not that being or reality is no longer at the center of philosophy, since a human being as the subject occupies the central position. The problem is more complicated. Humanity was not the main object of philosophical knowledge for Plato, Descartes, or Leibniz. Those philosophers came close to saying that they did not recognize the world around us as reality, which exists in itself. In Plato's thought, ideas that are not in the material world appear, and in Descartes, the ideas are within us; their philosophical lineage goes back to the scholastic theory of the *medium quod*. According to Descartes, human beings apprehend intermediaries as objects in themselves. The intermediaries, and not Platonic ideas, became ideas in a Cartesian sense, but as objects, they are not the world that surrounds us. We may speak of this philosophy as the philosophy of the subject, but with a certain reservation, because the object of this philosophy is not the subject qua subject, because the object is found in the subject; ideas are in the subject, not beyond it.

The philosophy of the subject in this sense existed before Descartes in the current of Scholasticism that held that the *medium quod* is the object of our knowledge. Yet, when we speak of the philosophy of the subject, it is a question of something more, that the subject acquires a special status in relation to reality, and that the subject begins to play a very important role in the construction of a philosophical system. At a certain point, a system is being constructed in Descartes's thought because of the renowned *cogito*, which is supposed to be the beginning of a system after the model of a first premise in mathematics; but it is not yet a system to the measure of the philosophical systems of Descartes's successors such as Spinoza or Leibniz, not to mention the systems of the German idealists. It is still a question of something else, the constructive role of the subject in the making of the known object. In this respect, Descartes's philosophy was passive; his ideas were innate, and human beings as thinking things and as extended things have been created by God. The *cogito* is only supposed to help in finding an indubitable starting point for the cultivation of philosophy. Meanwhile, the philosophy of the subject understood in a narrower sense gives the subject a constructive status both in the systemic and ontological dimension. For this reason, the word object has been adopted for a new role in which it will mean an internal keystone for a philosophical system.

This approach to the subject by the assimilation of the Latin term in the German version (*Subjekt*), which brings about a new philosophical meaning, appears first in Kant. Kant was the one who connected the subject with what Descartes called the thinking thing (*res cogitans*). He then made far reaching modifications to the concept of the subject in the light of his own philosophy;

in his philosophy the connection with the scholastic tradition was radically broken.

In what contexts does the subject appear in Kant? It obviously appears in a traditional context, but this mainly refers to logic. Kant speaks of the subject as an element of a judgment in which there is a relation between the predicate and the subject (twice). Apart from this, a completely new term appears: the 'thinking subject' (*das denkende Subjekt*). Although in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the term does not appear often (three times), this was the first time the word 'subject' was used in the sense to which we have become accustomed today, when we speak of the philosophy of the subject, namely, that the subject is that which emanates from itself intellectual acts. Up to the time of Kant, this had been reserved either generally for substance or for a concrete faculty, in this case the intellect. In other words, Kant is speaking of the subject in the context of the object, as he wants to say that the object does not come from reality but from the subject: "in a priori knowledge one cannot attribute anything to objects that the thinking subject (*das denkende Subjekt*) does not draw from itself."[17] Here, we can see a crucial matter that is typical of the philosophy of the subject: the object of knowledge is made by the knower, or more precisely, by the thinking subject. The word 'knowledge' directs us to reality such as it is found, while the word 'thought' is unnecessary because making is also thinking. In the case of Kant, where the object is an a priori derivative of the subject, all the more we should not speak of knowledge but of thinking. Although the expression 'thinking subject' only rarely appears, we find very frequent mention of the subjective conditions (*subiektive Bedingungen*, but not subjective in today's sense) of our intellectual and sensory knowledge.[18] Hence, the word 'subject' also occurs as describing that in which the known (thought-of) objects are found that we apprehend, but not as objects in themselves.[19] The objects we apprehend come from us, from the subject. The faculties that make the objects by forming them according to a priori categories are found in the subject. Without those subjective conditions, for example space and time in knowledge, objects are nothing.[20] As well, pure categories without evident data are also nothing.[21]

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17   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B XXIII.

18   Thinking appears in yet other conceptual clusters as a thinking substance (*das denkende Substanz*), a thinking essence (*das denkende Wesen*), a thinking "I" (*denkende Ich*), and a thinking self (*denkende Selbst*).

19   Ibid., A 38.

20   Ibid., A 49.

21   Ibid., A 349.

How did Kant come to the point where he identified substance with the subject, which is the human being, and not with any sort of substance whatsoever? This appears when Kant analyzes the parallels of the pure reason, or more precisely, the parallel of substantiality. He starts from a logical definition of the subject as substance and moves to the subject as 'I.' This appears as follows: "That, the representation of which is the absolute subject of our judgments, and which thereby cannot be used as a definition of another thing, is a substance."[22] This definition looks to the definition of substance given by Aristotle in the *Categories*.[23] Starting from this definition, Kant describes the status of the 'I' as a substance: "I as a thinking being am the absolute subject of all my possible judgments, and this representation of myself cannot be used as a predication of any sort of thing whatsoever. And so I, as a thinking being (a soul), am a substance."[24] Since what is called 'I' cannot be predicated of any sort of thing, this 'I' is a substance. This movement from substance to human subject is made with reference to the Aristotelian definition of substance as subject. Notably, there is no mention of 'I' in Aristotle, or of a thinking being, but of rational being, nor was the thinking thing identified with the soul, because thinking is not a function of the soul, but of the faculty of the soul called the reason.

As Kant prepared this line of reasoning for criticism (because it is a fallacious argument), he based the conception of the 'I' as a substance on the fact or idea that the 'I' cannot be predicated about anything, and so, in keeping with the definition, it must be a substance. Here we are dealing with a certain abbreviation of thought, and logic has been confused with metaphysics. The definition of 'substance' as the subject of predication was given by Aristotle in the *Categories*, and so, Aristotle was thinking more of predication than of presenting the status of substance as being. This is important because, as we remember, the definition of substance as subject was not upheld in *Metaphysics* as the fundamental definition. Meanwhile, in Kant's fallacious argument, it appears as the fundamental definition. Moreover, Kant somewhat mechanically transfers the definition of substance as subject from Aristotle's *Categories* to the 'I,' but Aristotle presents concrete things such as 'this man'; for example, Socrates, as examples of real substances.[25] 'I,' in this context, is not a substance, because to be a substance it is not enough that something cannot be predicated of something else. This only indicates that the 'I' belongs to the order of

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22   Ibid., A 348.

23   Aristot., *Cat.* 2a–4b.

24   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 348.

25   Aristot., *Cat.* 13b.

substance, not to the order of the other categories, the accidents. Metaphysics and not logic studies what substance is in the order of being. Kant gave to logical definition a metaphysical rank, which when the metaphysical aspect was ignored had to lead to a fallacious argument. Every human individual is a substance, even if it is not thinking or is unaware of its 'I,' for example, during sleep. This is the case because we are operating with another concept of substance—not the one that Kant held.

Kant's role in this case was not that he criticized the fallacies of psychology (and especially anthropology), but that when he formulated a fallacy and criticized it, he connected his critique not only with substance but with the subject, and so, he took a shortcut from a logical definition to a metaphysical definition. This contributed to the rise of a fallacy, the weakness of which Kant laid bare. The fallacy appeared in his own version as he saw the scholastic conception of humanity accepted at that time. Nonetheless, he showed why he could see a connection between the 'I' and the subject, and substance. In this way, regardless of any reservations, the category of the subject was found at the center of reflections on humanity, because the category connected the 'I' with substance.

Thus, despite criticism, the subject in terms of a purely logical category (as an element of a judgment) and in terms of a purely metaphysical category (as an aspect of a substance in relation to properties) entered the realm of anthropology, but in the surroundings of both metaphysics and epistemology. The subject becomes a category used to refer to human beings, used interchangeably with substance, essence, 'I,' and self. By this path, through Kant and not through Descartes, the category of the subject as that which thinks and reflects would find its way into the systems of the German idealists.

What, in a conceptual sense, prepared the way for the exposition of the subject as a substance who thinks? It could have been Descartes's philosophy, but only in part, because, along with thinking things, there were also extended things. The word 'thing' here appears in the sense of substance. The philosophy of Spinoza and the philosophy of Leibniz played a pioneering role. Spinoza attributed to one and only one substance the attributes of both continuity and thought. Thus, a substance qua substance is a thinking substance. However, he did use the new term, 'subject,' because substance remained substance.[26]

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26   It is surprising that later, keeping in mind the influence of Spinoza's philosophy as a system on the German idealists, that for his own part he did not transvalue substance to subject; cf. Philippe Grosos, *Système et subjectivité. Étude sur la signification et l'enjeu du concept du système: Fichte, Hegel, Schelling* [System and Subjectivity. Studies on

In turn, in Leibniz's thought, many substances exist, not just one substance, and each of these substances is a thinking substance. As a thinking substance, each substance is a simple substance, and its identity demarcates thinking, consciousness, and the self.[27] We are already just a step away from the subject, but Leibniz introduces another word drawn from the Cabala, the word 'monad,' a technical term that became part of history with Leibniz.[28] The thinking substance became a thinking subject, a self-aware 'I,' first because of Kant, but this was more in the epistemological dimension than the ontological dimension, and moreover, it was a position burdened by the error discovered by critical philosophy. This thinking subject would be the subject and substance par excellence in an ontological sense, due to the German idealists, whose systems would be built with inspiration from Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant. Not only thought, but also freedom, would belong to the essence of this subject, even with the predominance of freedom (Schelling).[29] Nonetheless, for the thinking and free subject to become the keystone of all ontology, philosophy would have to deal with Kant's reservations, and philosophy would have to take the form of a system.

The subject, or *subiectum*, replaced substance, or *ousía*, as the chief category of being. In this context, subjectivity acquired the highest ontological position, because the subject is the highest manifestation of being, if not the only one. This is the way started by Descartes, in whose philosophy the ego, or 'I,' treated as a thinking substance (or thing) is the starting point. This substance-subject is the main point of reference and support for philosophy because the system is built on the subject, and even from the subject, or more precisely speaking, both the system and reality are derived from the ultimate subject.[30]

Although in Descartes, there are also non-thinking substances (or things) that are only extended and are around us, among Descartes's continuators, this dualism led first to either materialistic or spiritualistic monism, and at the end, it was fused into one in the framework of German idealism.[31] In German idealism the subject was ultimately introduced in the place of substance. This

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Signification and Stake of the Conception of System: Fichte, Hegel, Schelling] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1996), 96.

27   Ibid., 97.

28   I write of this is my work, *Science in Culture*, 147.

29   Grosos, *Système et subjectivité*, 99–100.

30   Courtine, *Les catégories de l'être*, 79–80.

31   At this point, it is German idealism, the fulfillment of which is Schelling's system, that becomes the expression of the specific character of what we describe as the new philosophy; ibid., 79.

subject meant the self-aware Absolute, who, by various ways, depending on the system, drew out of himself various forms of reality, and in the end returned to himself. The subject apprehended in this way is inscribed into the pantheistic vision of reality, since each kind of reality (nature, art, the state) is only a phase in the development of the Absolute. Ultimately, there is only one subject, and that is the Divine subject. Only after that deification did the concept of the subject enter the humanities, including philosophy. The concept was different from the one developed in ancient and medieval philosophy; the old concept grew out of the concept of substance and reached its apogee in the concept of the person. The fundamental difference was that the concept of the person as based on substance retained the element of individuality, but the concept of substance as subject did not. Therefore, when the subject becomes the main ontological category, and consciousness determines subjectivity, then it is easy to shift from substance as *tode ti*, this concrete being or these concrete beings, to one all-encompassing consciousness that is not necessarily a personal being. There is no necessary passage from consciousness to personal being, since in many currents of the philosophy of the subject, not only German idealism, but also in phenomenology, absolute consciousness takes on impersonal features (Husserl, Scheler).

The transition from substance to subject, and the later exclusion of substance with consciousness alone, remaining, has had very important consequences, which are not necessarily positive. This is because neither human beings nor God have to be personal beings, although they remain subjects. Just as the concept of value without roots in the transcendentals, so also the concept of the subject without roots in substance leads to a state of ontological suspension, and the only way out of it is idealism, but in practical terms idealism leads to relativism and subjectivism.

Meanwhile, in realistic metaphysics, we are dealing with the evolution of the conception of human beings from beings composed of soul and body understood in keeping with the Aristotelian tradition as an rational animal (*animal rationale*), to human beings as subjects who are persons. The Aristotelian conception presented certain difficulties because in it there was no room for the unity and singularity of each human individual in the bodily dimension and in the spiritual dimension. Aristotle did not resolve the problem of the relation of what is spiritual in human beings (the passive intellect and the agent intellect) to the body. As a result, theories arose, especially among Arab philosophers, that the agent intellect (Avicenna), or in general the entire intellect (Averroes) was one and was beyond individual human persons. Another problem concerns that which properly constitutes the reason for the unity of

each human individual. That reason could not be form; that is, the soul, especially if that which was most important in humanity, namely, reason, did not belong to the individual form. The situation was a dead end, and there was a strong temptation either to Platonism, where an individual human person is not a unity of soul and body, but where the body and soul are two separate substances, to Averroism, or to Avicennianism, where there is only one intellect.

To resolve this problem, Thomas turned to the fundamental experience that every human individual has, "the same man is the one who perceives that at the same time he understands intellectually and feels sensibly, and sensible feeling does not happen without the body, hence, it is necessary for the body to be a part of man."[32]

To explain this experience, Thomas constructed a new conception of humanity, in which human beings are a unity of soul and body, and the soul is a subject to which existence belongs as the highest act. In this way, for the first time, the discovery of existence as the act of being allowed the formulation of a theory of man as one being both in the bodily-spiritual structure and in the aspect of the subjectification of human acts as individual acts of each human individual. Each human individual is indeed a being that exists in itself, a bodily-spiritual being, who knows itself as 'I,' who elicits from it acts, acts that are both bodily and mental, or spiritual. Such a being is called a person. According to Thomas, the being-person is that which is most perfect in all nature.[33] Therefore, the personal being appears as the object of investigation not only in philosophical anthropology, but also in metaphysics, which, when it analyzes being, first considers the hierarchy of beings in which being as person is discovered.

The analysis of being as subject in realistic metaphysics went in this direction to show its crowning point under the form of personal being. Meanwhile, in the 'philosophy of the subject,' the individuality and separateness of each personal being was lost. Also, in some way, as a consequence, the personal dimension of the human being was lost, because the concept of the subject was associated primarily with the Divine Being. Such an operation could take place

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32   *ipse idem homo est qui percipit se et et intelligere et sentire: sentire autem non est sine corpore: unde oportet corpus aliquam esse hominis partem*; Aquinas, *ST* I, Q76. Art. 1, resp.; cf. Krąpiec, *I-Man*, trans. A. Lescoe, A. Woznicki, and T. Sandok (New Britain, CT: Mariel Publications, 1983), 94.

33   "*persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura*" (person signifies what is most perfect in all nature, a subsistent individual of a rational nature); Aquinas, *ST* I, Q29. Art. 3, resp.; cf. Krąpiec, "I-Man," Chap. 11.

because concepts came before existence. The lack of a realistic conception of being, which could not be present unless existence were treated as an act of being, had the result that the reference point was the concept of being. In the framework of the concept, it was the content, which as a content took on the feature of generality, and in this way, it did not allow recognition of the person as an individual.

Ontology and System

The word 'system,' along with words such as 'problem' and 'value,' is one of the more frequently encountered words in science and in ordinary language. We speak of logical, axiomatic, deductive, mathematical, didactic, aesthetic, ethical, religious, legal, philosophical, theological, and metaphysical systems.[1] When we ask about the meaning of the word itself, it turns out that there have been various definitions. Since the word comes from Greek, it is all the more difficult to appeal to some intuition of what the word means as it is used in European languages. Most often when we speak of a system, we want to emphasize that something constitutes a well-ordered whole, and especially something that is a product of human thought.

In the case of philosophy, the concept of a system is used very often, whether in reference to eminent authors beginning with Thales, or in reference to a philosophical current such as Platonism, Aristotelianism, Thomism, or Hegelianism. The suffix '-ism' indicates that a current of thought is being treated as a system. When we investigate the history of the meaning of the word and its career in philosophy, then it turns out that the word entered philosophy relatively recently, in modern times. It then became very strongly rooted because it established, as it were, a way of looking at philosophers and philosophy, until it finally took on an ontological power of its own, because philosophy, which is a system, is supposed to possess the ability to constitute reality itself (German idealism).

What sort of philosophy is it? It is the philosophy that emerged from ontology. Ontology made possible the change from philosophy to system.

The next phase in the history of philosophy consisted in anti-systemic thought, and then criticism would come into play, which did not consider the difference between ontology and metaphysics, and the critique of system and ontology would be conceived also as the critique of metaphysics, although it would really be only a critique of ontology. For that reason, it is important to investigate the context of the rise and fall of the concept of system in philosophy, because just as philosophy cannot be reduced to ontology, so system cannot be associated exclusively with German idealism.

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1 Maryniarczyk, *System metafizyki.*

System: Etymology and Pre-philosophical Meaning

The word 'system' comes from Greek and it was received in Latin in the form of a loan translation, or calque. It is composed of two parts: '*syn*,' which means connection, and '*hístemi*,' which has many meanings, but the starting point is the action of putting or establishing. '*Systéma*' is the establishment or compilation of a whole. There may be different wholes, but in the Greek language, the whole that is formed by a living organism comes to the forefront (Aristotle). Each human individual, as a whole composed of soul and body, was also sometimes called a system (Epicurus). The universe was a system because it constituted an organized whole. Secondarily, the effects of human activity such as a literary work (Aristotle) or a political regime (Plutarch) were called systems. System also appears in medicine (*Corpus Hippocraticum*) and in music to designate intervals.[2]

Thus, in the Greek sense, a system is an ordered whole that constitutes a unity. The paradigm of unity, or its highest manifestation, would not be a logical system; that is, an arrangement of symbolically designated concepts and judgments, but an organism, which is a much more complicated whole than a system of signs, and moreover, it is not abstract, but exists concretely, is dynamic, and is alive.

In the Latin language, a precise loan translation or calque appears from the Greek (*sustéma*), but it was still unknown in Cicero's time.[3] More often, they used words such as '*constitutio*' (regime, organization), '*coagmentatio*' (a joint, a symphysis, a connection), and, in the medieval period, '*compages*' (collection, accumulation), '*coactio*' (congregation, assembly), or '*constructio*' (construction, arrangement).[4] Generally, the original meaning of the word 'system' in Greek or Latin did not refer to science or knowledge.

System in Ancient Philosophy

Both in ancient times and in the medieval period, we encounter the word 'system' rather rarely in the context of philosophy, and then we find it basically in reference to the meaning that was perpetuated in ordinary language—we

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2   *Słownik grecko-polski*, 4:248–249, s.v. σύ-στημα.

3   *Słownik łacińsko-polski*, 5: 326, s.v. *systēma, -atis*.

4   See *Geschichte des Systemdenkens und des Systembegriffs* [History of Systems Thinking and System Concept], accessed September 2, 2016, http://www.muellerscience.com/ SPEZIALITAETEN/System/systemgesch.htm.

find no explicit mention of a 'philosophical system' or 'metaphysical system.'[5] It was an ex post facto procedure to call the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, or Thomas 'systems'; that procedure could be misleading or simply wrong depending on how one understands the word 'system.' Therefore, it is so important to draw out various aspects of how the word 'system' was used in the history of philosophy.[6]

Both Plato and Aristotle used the word 'system' very rarely. Plato used it to describe musical intervals and the musical scale. Those are examples that would illustrate how the philosophical problem of unity and plurality should be resolved. We know that for Parmenides it was a very important philosophical problem, because he denied the plurality that is so evident to our knowledge. Meanwhile, Plato thought that plurality could be intellectually accepted when it formed a unity, and this means that it took the form of a system (*Philebus* 17 D-E). In another dialogue, albeit of dubious authenticity, the word 'system' referred to the numbers that described the whole of the cosmos (*Epinomis* 991 E).

In Aristotle's extant works, the word '*sustéma*' appears only four times. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that for a whole (that is, for a system) that is composed of parts, such as the political state or human individuals, that which is most essential is most important.[7] In turn, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle used system in reference to art, where he explained that tragedy as a species of drama must be distinguished from epic poetry, because drama cannot be the same system as epic poetry; that is, it cannot have an epic structure or composition.[8] The word 'system' is rendered in various translations as structure or composition.

Twice Aristotle mentions a system in a short work on nature, *On the Generation of Animals*, where he said that heat is the first principle of an animal and its organism (*sustématos*) from the moment the animal feels the need for

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5   We do not find the word 'system' at all in the works of Thomas, which would confirm the thesis that the word was not used in a technical philosophical sense in the Middle Ages.

6   Various concepts of system in works of philosophy from the *Corpus Hippocraticum* to the German idealists are discussed by A. von der Stein in *"Der Systembegriff in seiner Geschichtlichen Entwicklung"* [Historical Development of the System Concept], in *System und Klassifikation in Wissenschaft und Dokumentation* [System and Classification Research and Documentation], ed. Alwin Diemer (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1968), 1–13.

7   Aristot., *Nic.* 1168b 32.

8   Aristot., *Poet.* 456a 12. "Again, the poet should remember what has been often said, and not make an epic structure into a tragedy–by an epic structure"; *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, with a Critical Text and Translation of the* Poetics, 4th ed. trans. S.H. Butcher (New York: Dover, 1951), 67.

nourishment,[9] and in another place, with regard to internally viviparous animals, "right after it is shaped (*sustéma*), the embryo is like an egg."[10] And so, according to Aristotle, both the embryo and the egg constitute an organized and animated whole, and this means that they are systems. Those are all the passages in which the word 'system' appears in the extant works of Aristotle. There is no mention of a system as a structure of scientific knowledge, or even less, of a philosophical system.

We should note that the word was introduced in the translation of one sentence of the *Metaphysics*. Translated literally, Aristotle says, "after the philosophies mentioned appeared the work (pragmateia) of Plato." In Tredennick's English translation, he does not speak of Plato's work, but of his 'system.'[11] In turn, in Ross's translation, system appears instead of the philosophy of Plato's predecessors.[12] It is similar in Polish translations, where once, instead of 'philosophies,' we read of 'systems.'[13] Elsewhere, once, instead of 'Plato's work,' the expression 'Plato's system' is used.[14] It is not a serious mistake that this expression is introduced in these translations; it shows how the word has found a home in contemporary European languages. Nevertheless, a certain danger arises here. Insofar as Plato's philosophy, even ex post facto and in a sense that is not completely precise, can be called a system, to call the views of the pre-Socratics 'systems' is excessive, because they were intuitions and abbreviated sayings, but not philosophical thought developed as a whole.

In a philosophical sense, 'system' began to appear for the first time in the writings of the Stoics.[15] This was no accident, although we may wonder why Plato did not call his own philosophy a system. If, in the Greek tradition, the

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9   Aristot., *De. Gen.* 740a 20.

10   Ibid., 758 b 4.

11   "The philosophies described above were succeeded by the system of Plato"; Aristot.,
       Met. 987a; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics. Books I–IX*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA,
       London: Harvard University Press, 1933).

12   "After the systems we have named came the philosophy of Plato"; Aristot., *Met.* 987a;
       cf. *Metaphysica*, 2nd ed., vol. 1. A revised text with introduction and commentary by
       W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928).

13   "After the mentioned systems, the philosophy of Plato arose"; Aristot., *Met.* 987a; cf. Aristotle, *Metafizyka*, 2nd ed. trans. K. Leśniak (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe,
       1984.

14   "After the philosophers we have spoken of appeared Plato's system"; Aristot., *Met.* 987a;
       Aristotle, *Metafizyka I*, ed. Krąpiec and Maryniarczyk, trans. Żeleźnik's.

15   F.P. Hager, "System," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie. 10 St–T.* [Historical Dictionary of Philosophy. 10 St–T], ed. J. Ritter and K. Gründer, 10:824–825. (Basel:
       Schwabe, 1998), 10:824–825. This is an extensive article on the history of how the concept
       of a system was understood in philosophy.

chief manifestation of a system was an organism, then first of all, the entire cosmos should have been called a system (containing heaven and earth, gods and humans), because it was one organism that possessed one soul.[16] In this sense, the cosmos constituted a system, not only an ordered system, but a dynamic and living system. Plato did not do this, but the Stoics did, because they were the ones who called the cosmos a system. The second meaning in which the Stoics used the word 'system' was at the logical and epistemological level. At the logical level, a syllogism was a system, because a syllogism was a whole composed of premises and a conclusion. On the epistemological level a system was knowledge that allowed human beings to master an art or to behave (well) in life. The Stoic conception of a system contained certain intuitions that were developed, but only centuries later.

System as Organized Knowledge

During the medieval period, the word 'system' rarely appeared, and the Latinized word returned to grace only in modern times. In the sixteenth century, Philip Melanchthon used the word for the liberal arts that belonged to the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), because they formed an integral whole in education. Copernicus used the word 'system' in his most famous work, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) in reference to the universe. Walther Rivius used the word in his translation of Vitrivius's work on architecture, but it was in reference to music (*Systemata der Music*, 1584). The theologians Nicolaus Selnecker (1573) and Zacharius Ursinus (1581) also referred to it.[17]

A real avalanche of systems occurred in the seventeenth century, such that we could even speak of 'systemomania.' This is seen, for example, in the titles of works published at the time. We have systems of logic, grammar, theology, politics, astrology, physics, the philosophy of nature, ethics, law, rhetoric, practical philosophy, the liberal arts, the art of memory, nature, the soul, agriculture, horticulture, anatomy, history, medicine, the world, geography, patrology, cosmology, and finally, systems of philosophy and of metaphysics. To summarize, in the seventeenth century, we can encounter the word in over 150 titles of works in science, philosophy, and theology.[18]

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16   Plat., *Tim.* 30b–c.

17   *Geschichte des Systemdenkens und Systembegriffs.*

18   Leo Catana, "The Concept 'System of Philosophy': The Case of Jacob Brucker's Historiography of Philosophy." *History and Theory* 44:1 (2005) 72–90. 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2005.00309.x.

In most cases, the word 'system' appears in Latin titles, and it appears sporadically in some national languages (it appears in Italian in 1508, and in French in 1552). In 1615, we find it in an Italian title to designate the new Pythagorean image of the world (Paolo Antonio Foscarini), and later also in Galileo's dialogue on the two systems of the world (1630). In the second half of the century, the word started to appear in English titles, and somewhat later it started to appear in the German language.

In older Latin, the word 'system' as used by the moderns corresponded to words such as '*corpus*,' '*summa*,' or '*loci communes*.' A theological system (*systema theologicum*) means a compilation of the truths of the faith (*complexus articulorum fidei*).[19] Leonard Hutter, in the *Compendium Locorum theologicum* (1610), presented the conception of theology as a perfect and absolute system, because the particular links in it are joined as a chain (*integrum doctrinae christianae corpus sive systema perfectum et absolutum*).

Klemens Timpler was the author of the first System of metaphysics (*Metaphysicae systema methodicum*, 1604). Shortly thereafter, Heinrich Nolle published *Methodus metaphysici systematis convenientissima* (1613). Then there was an interval of several decades, and at the end of the century, more systems of metaphysics appeared; for example, Pierre Sylvain's system of philosophy, a part of which was metaphysics (*Systême de philosophie, contenant la logique, la metaphysique, la physique, et la morale*, 1690).[20]

Why did the word 'system' have such a successful career in the seventeenth century? Why was the word applied to philosophy and metaphysics? To answer these questions, we should first explain how the word was then understood.

In his definition of a scientific system, Timpler said that a system is an integral whole of doctrine composed of various parts (*integrum corpus doctrinae ex diversis partibus coagmentatum*).[21] He states further that a system cannot be vague or confused, but must be well-ordered according to methodically determined laws (*systema non confusum et perturbatum, sed bene secundum leges methodi ordinatum et dispositum*). The point was that a science should meet defined methodological criteria whereby it may be called a system. This concerns a metaphysical system that, as a scientific theory, must possess a definite structure and look to laws and methods. A system must also form a closed whole. The structure of a system is such that it is based on first premises from

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19   See this Chapter, n4.
20   Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 418–432.
21   Clemens Timpler, *Metaphysicae systema methodicum* [Methodical System of Metaphysics], ed. Rudolphus Goclenius and R. Goclenii (Hanoviae, 1606), 4.

which all subordinate conclusions are drawn. A system is therefore, an elaborate syllogism.

Where did such a conception of a system come from? Here, we are dealing with the domination of the nominalistic approach, which was first seen in the Stoics, and then on a grand scale in the late medieval authors, who saw science as a collection of interconnected propositions derived from fundamental principles.[22] The ancient and medieval nominalists did not call a science in this sense a 'system.' When the word 'system' appeared, it turned out to be a very universal key for determining the line between what is and what is not a science, and for demarcating the structure of knowledge, if knowledge was to be regarded as scientific. The dividing line between ages such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is, in this case, schematic, and even wrong, because it obliterates the continuity of many philosophical elements shared by philosophy of different epochs that have even be treated as if they were in opposition. Yet those philosophers were united by nominalism more than they were divided by their differences.

If the fundamental structure of a system is based on a syllogism, then the syllogism becomes the model for the construction not only of science, but of all organized knowledge that, because of a syllogistic structure, could be likened to science. Therefore, all organized knowledge began to be systematized, not only the particular and strict sciences, but also philosophy and theology, and in general, Christian doctrine as a whole.

The Calvinist philosopher and theologian, Bartholomäus Keckermann, developed a system of metaphysics that was only a part of a great project to encompass Christian doctrine in one whole; that is, in one system. In that system were found a system of logic, of grammar, of metaphysics, and of theology. Thus, it encompassed the whole of human knowledge, the parts of which included various types of science, the instruments of knowledge, and supernatural knowledge. Thus, a maximalist approach to systems played a great role in the history of the special cult of systems, because of that very influential conception.

Keckermann's works were republished several times: his system of logic was published fifteen times in the seventeenth century, and his system of metaphysics was published four times.[23]

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22   Armand A. Maurer. "The Unity of a Science. St. Thomas and the Nominalists." In Maurer, *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274–1974*, 271.

23   Keckermann also published other works in which the word 'system' appeared in the title: *Systema logicae, tribus libris adornatum, pleniore praeceptorum methodo, et commentariis scriptis ad praeceptorum illustrationem* [System of Logic], Hanoviae, 1600; *Systema*

The word 'system' was the most fitting word for the overwhelming tendency to integrate the whole of human knowledge. It fit the spirit of the time, when the sudden development of the sciences in modern times awakened at the same time the need to encompass them in one whole. Here, the word 'system' seemed to be in its most proper place, or at least well-used. On the other hand, there was a growing awareness of the significance of methodological criteria in the formation of science, so the emphasis fell on logical correctness and the application of the right methods or laws. Also, the formal ordering of the entire body of knowledge was supposed to underscore its scientific character to an even greater degree, especially since the category of the scientific had more and more social prestige.

Just as Keckermann had contributed to the popularization of the expression 'system of metaphysics,' so, in turn, the second composite expression, 'philosophical system,' was promoted in the first half of the eighteenth century by the protestant historian of philosophy, Johann Jakob Brucker. He was renowned as the author of the first modern history of philosophy, one that was more elaborate than any before because it included as many as five volumes. It was called a "Critical History of Philosophy from the Beginning of the World Up to Our Times" (*Historia Critica Philosophia a mundi incunabulis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta*, Lipsiae, 1742–1744). Brucker treated the category of 'system' as crucial in showing philosophical movements and views in all periods of history. In this way, the ancient and medieval philosophers, even those whose views had been expressed in aphorisms or in poetical form, became authors of philosophical systems ex post facto.

Brucker did not define the word 'system' directly, although he did present the salient features of a philosophical system: it should be autonomous in relation to non-philosophical disciplines; it should include various domains of philosophy that are consistent with each other; and the theses of a

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grammaticae Hebraeae, sive sanctae linguae exactior methodus [System of Hebrew Grammar], Hanoviae, 1600; *Systema S.S. theologiae, tribus libris. Methodum ac dispositionem operis tabula praefixa adumbrat* [System of Theology], Hanoviae, 1602; *Systema logicae minus succincto praeceptorum compendio tribus libris annis ab hinc aliquot adornatum adornatum* [System of Minor Logic], Hanoviae, 1606; *Systema ethicae. Tribus libris adornatum et publicis praelectionibus traditum in Gymnasio Dantiscano* [System of Ethics], Hanoviae 1607; *Systema disciplinae politicae, publicis praelectionibus anno 1606 propositum in gymnasio Dantiscano* [System of Politics], Hanoviae 1608; the system of law *Systematis selectorum ius Iustinianeum et feudale concernentium volumen alterum continens quatuor illius partes posteriores* [System of Law], Francofurti 1608; *Systema rhetorica, in quo artis praecepta plene et methodica traduntur a 1606 privatim propositum in Gymnasio Dantiscano* [System of Rhetoric], Hanoviae 1608.

system should be deduced from one principle. Brucker also said that philosophers should not be hindered by the past, and should even break from the past to find for themselves autonomous principles from which they draw their systems, likening a system to the foundation for a house. Historians reconstruct a system on the basis of a philosopher's writings, reaching at the end the principles that were first for the system's author. A critical history of philosophy meant finding the context in which the system arose, including the influences of earlier systems.[24]

Brucker's work, and thereby his conception of a system, was widespread in a short time because they were regarded as authoritative for the French encyclopedists (Diderot drew upon them) and for Kant. From that time to this day, people have looked at the history of philosophy and at philosophy itself through the prism of a system; they have looked for a principle or a small number of principles from which they may deduce or draw out other theses. The history of philosophy is the history of philosophical systems, and so, the word has been introduced in translations of the works of philosophers from ancient times to modernity, even though the philosophers had not used the word themselves.

Among the philosophers who came before Brucker, Francis Bacon used the word 'system' for various philosophical movements or lines of thought.[25] Malebranche was the first to call Descartes's philosophy a system.[26] It should be emphasized that while the term does not appear among philosophers whose views would have qualified to be called systems, the word was introduced in translations of their works. Thus, the term 'system' did not appear in the works of Suárez, Descartes, or Spinoza.[27]

The term appeared rather early in philosophy, in German Scholasticism, which was developed mainly by Protestants. The apogee of German Scholasticism was Leibniz's work entitled, *A New System of Nature and the Interconnection of Substances* (*Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances, aussi bien que de l'union qu'il y a entre l'âme et le corps*, 1695). In this work, Leibniz spoke both in the introduction and twice in his later disquisitions about his conception as a system.[28] Here, system is understood, on the

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24   Catana, "The Concept 'System of Philosophy.'

25   Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, I. 44, 61, 62, 63.

26   See this Chapter, n4.

27   Andrzej Maryniaryczyk rightly remarks that after Descartes "systemic thinking enters into modern philosophy"; *System metafizyki*, 14, but for his own part, Descartes does not call his philosophy a system.

28   Leibniz, *The Philosophical Works of Leibniz. Comprising the Monadology, New System of Nature*, ... (1646–1716), trans. George Martin Duncan (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1890).

one hand, as a proposal for resolutions of certain philosophical questions that arose after Descartes, and on the other hand, as a plan for an image of the universe as composed of the elements that Leibniz regarded as fundamental.

In Leibniz's *Monadology*, the word refers either to pre-established harmony or to the Universe.[29] In turn, in *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 'system' is used to mean an astronomical theory five times, while God's thought as including the whole of all phenomena, which God regards as good and therefore, creates them (or perhaps emanates them) fourteen times, and as a theory that includes all nature, which is treated mechanistically, twenty-one times.[30] Also in his *Théodicée*, the word 'system' appears relatively frequently. Leibniz uses it in reference to the conception he created of pre-established harmony, which allows him to explain the soul's connection with the body; he also speaks of Ralph Cudworth's intellectual system and of his own system that explains freedom of the will and help from God.[31] The word 'system' is thus included in metaphysical disquisitions concerning various particular questions, but it is also used for the theory of the entire cosmos, the universe, and it also includes God. In this way the concept of system encroaches on physics, which after all is connected with metaphysics.

To explain something in a systematic way means to impose metaphysical laws concerning force on laws concerning extension. In this way, a coherent and unified whole of propositions can be formed, and this precisely is what the word 'system' expresses.[32]

On the formal side, Leibniz attributes all meaning to a logical system that would encompass all the laws contained in the particular sciences. He borrows such an idea of science from medieval nominalists such as Roscelin and Ockham. A system is a whole arranged according to primary principles and conclusions deductively derived from those principles. The system is supposed to replace the conception of science primarily as a habit (*habitus*), and so, as a human individual's constant disposition to harmonize itself cognitively with reality.[33] In the light of nominalism, essences of things do not possess the feature of universality, but terms (names) primarily possess universality.

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29   Ibid.

30   Ibid.

31   Ibid.

32   Michel Fichant, *Science et métaphysique dans Descartes et Leibniz* [Science and Metaphysics in Descartes and Leibniz] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 245.

33   "*est sciendum quod scientia quaelibet, sive sit realis sive rationalis, est tantum de propositionibus tamquam de illis quae sciuntur, quia solae propositiones sciuntur*" (it must be noted that any science, real or rational, is as much about propositions as about things known, because only propositions are known); Guilhelmi de Ockham, *Super quattuor libros sententiarum subtilissimae quastiones aerumdemque decisiones*, lib. I, dist. 2, q. 4;

Propositions are composed of names, and propositions are either premises or conclusions. Science, in the first and fundamental sense, must be a system of propositions arranged in syllogistic series. Propositions are precisely the object of science.[34] From here, it is only one step to say that science taken as a whole is a system composed of parts, and those parts are propositions, while the unity of science is not derived from the unity of the object to which the science would refer (the formal object; that is, the specific aspect of the reality that is under investigation), but it is only from the unity of the structure of the science itself. In this case, Ockham does not use the word 'system,' but uses one of the Latin synonyms for it; i.e., 'aggregate.'[35]

In Kant's philosophical works, we find the word 'system' quite often. We read of the system of categories, the system of the world (*Weltsystem*), the system of nature (*Natursystem*), a logical system, a system of ends, the system of a priori knowledge, the system of pure reason, the system of transcendental philosophy, and the system of metaphysics. (*System der Metaphysik*).[36] Kant also presents a most concise conception of a system: it is a whole of knowledge organized according to principles.[37] The details are found in the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment*, where Kant devises a plan for a pure philosophy and explains what he understands by a system of metaphysics. He writes:

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see also Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiennsis*, lib. 1, d. 2, q. 4; Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 279–280.

34 Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 280. In the case of the moderate version (conceptualism), we can speak of the universality of concepts, but they also do not have any counterpart on the side of reality. In reality, universal are names and they constitute a science.

35 "*Et ita accipiendo unitatem aggregationis pro omni unitate quae non est alicuius unius numero, concedo quod talis scientia (scil. metaphysica) est una unitate aggregationis*" (Accepting the unity of aggregate as valid for every kind of unity, which is not a numeric unity, I grant that such a science (i.e. metaphysics) is one in the sense of unity of aggregate; ibid., 284n51.

36 "I did succeed in solving the Humean problem, not merely for a particular case of the cause-effect connection but with respect to the whole faculty of pure reason. With that done, I could safely—though always slowly—go on to map out the whole domain of pure reason, establishing its boundaries and its contents. I did all this completely, and from general principles, which is what metaphysics needed if its *System* was to be securely built" (Riga: Bey Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1783), 14–15 (emphasis on 'system' in original).

37 Kant. Preface to *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* [Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science]. In *Sämtliche Werke* [Complete Works]. 6 vols. (Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1921–1922), 4:547; Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 269.

> For if such a system is one day to be completed under the general name of
> Metaphysics (which it is possible to achieve quite completely, and which
> is supremely important for the use of Reason in every reference), the soil
> for the edifice must be explored by Criticism as deep down as the founda-
> tion of the faculty of principles independent of experience, in order that
> it may sink in no part, for this would inevitably bring about the downfall
> of the whole.[38]

Thus, the 'system of metaphysics' is organized knowledge, the basis of which
are principles independent of experience. Those principles are a priori, and
they are a property of the human faculties of knowledge, but not of reality. It
is clear that the system of metaphysics, thus understood, cannot be a theory
of reality, although it is a system because it is organized.[39] After all, the fact
that scientific theses are organized does not automatically generate real facts;
theses do not gain cognitive powers because of a system. Yet the idea of science
(philosophy) as a system, in modern times, shines on greater and greater tri-
umphs up to an apotheosis in the views of Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte.

A System that Makes Reality: Hegel and Schelling

German idealism stands at the antipodes from the way philosophy had been
understood by the Greeks, who were the authors of philosophy as a distinct
domain of culture. For the Greeks, philosophy was a cognitive response to the
world around them and to the visible cosmos, which evoked not only curios-
ity but wonder. Curiosity came from the natural desire to know, a desire that
all human beings have at all times and in all civilizations. Wonder, in turn, is
a sign of a lack of understanding when what we know is not evident in itself.
Since, by nature, we want to understand (understanding, after all, is a form of
knowledge acquisition), we seek an answer that will allow us to understand.
The ways to seek the answer were, are, and can be different. It may be the road
of religion, art, or myth. The Greeks were renowned for discovering philoso-
phy and science to seek answers. The task of the science of philosophy was to

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38   Kant, Preface to *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951).

39   Kant compares a system to the structure of an animal: as a living animal is a self-sufficient
      whole that grows from within, and by the addition of parts, so a system grows out of
      internal principles; cf. Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 270. This comparison is lame be-
      cause an animal that grows is a real being, while a system, as Kant understands it—as a
      construct of the human intellect—is only an intentional being.

seek answers in a rational, intersubjectively communicable, and verifiable way. Aroused by curiosity and wonder for which they sought answers in the reality around them, was how philosophy was born.

After many centuries, German idealism, which is also called philosophy, would become a complete negation of philosophy, because reality would no longer be an object of knowledge for it, but the object would be something that philosophy itself would produce. Philosophy would not gather knowledge of reality but would constitute reality. It constitutes reality when it takes the form of a system. At that point, the system becomes the highest form of philosophy and of being. Is this still philosophy, or is it the deification of a certain form of human thinking? All the more, we must see what led to the situation resulted in philosophy changing from knowledge to a creative power in a cosmic dimension. The concept of the system played a key role in this process.

Hegel used the word 'system' very often, using it in reference to different spheres that had been perpetuated up to his time. We speak of the system of celestial bodies, a system of the soul, of numbers, of the state, of law (including natural law), an ethical system, a rational system, a system of logic, the system of natural numbers, a system of physics, physiology, and of philosophical systems, such as those of the Pythagoreans, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Jakob Böhme, Francis Bacon, and the Leibniz-Wolff system.[40] There was nothing new in that, but a novelty appears when Hegel explained what he understood by system, in particular, a philosophical system.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel explains that a philosophical system is a product of human thought that has itself as its object and discovers itself.[41] That definition shows that a system is something more than merely organized knowledge. What is crucial here is to understand the object of this body of knowledge. It is neither the world that surrounds humanity nor being qua being. It is not even Cartesian ideas, but the object for thought is thought itself.

The following questions arise: Why precisely is human thought exalted to the point that it does not need to take reality into account? Why does this thought take on extraordinary significance if it becomes a system? Should we

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40   Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, *Greek Philosophy to Plato*, trans. E.S. Haldane (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

41   "The history which we have before us is the history of Thought finding itself, and it is the case with Thought that it only finds itself in producing itself; indeed, that it only exists and is actual in finding itself. These productions are the philosophic systems; and the series of discoveries on which Thought sets out in order to discover itself, forms a work which has lasted twenty-five hundred years"; ibid., 1:5.

seek the answer in Hegel's philosophy itself, or does it have sources outside of philosophy?

The answer to the first question is not difficult: Hegel is working with a peculiar conception of human thought. He treats human thought not in sub-jective concreteness, as the thought of this specific human individual, but as a manifestation of divine thought, a divine idea. This thought or idea develops as it encompasses all reality, or more precisely, the development of this thought is the development of reality, because after all it is a divine idea. At the same time, philosophy is the knowledge of this idea and a form of this idea. In other words, the Hegelian image of being is pan-logical—everything is some form of thought, and it is pantheistic—everything is some form of deity.

What is the concept of system supposed to provide? The idea (being and thought), as it has a dynamic character, is not some sort of chaos, but it is orga-nized: starting from first principles, it passes through various phases until it is completed in the Absolute. In this context, the history of philosophy is system that takes shapes in the course of its development.[42]

Hegel applies his conception of system to historically diverse philosophical currents, which he includes in his own system, because philosophy is a part of the development of thought, and as such, it is a part of the development of real-ity. When the whole world (the universe, being) is explained by some principle that is dominant at a particular time, then we are dealing with a philosophical system.[43] This is because the philosophical system contains the principle that governs the idea in a particular epoch. Philosophical systems are nothing other than stages of the development of the idea.

A system should not take into account reality understood according to com-mon sense and realistically, because the system itself is reality. Moreover, the system should not take into account reality understood realistically, because that would disqualify it as a system. At most, we may hold that that there was a kind of philosophy that was never completely a system because it looked for reality outside of itself. For this reason, Hegel doubted whether Aristotle's philosophy could be called a system (a self-systematized whole), because empirical elements were present in it! Those elements as empirical formed separate concepts; that is, concepts dependent only on experience, and that made it impossible to derive a system from a single conception that was in-dependent of experience.[44] In this way, philosophical realism is recognized

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42   Ibid., 1:35–38.

43   Ibid., 1:38.

44   "Aristotle proceeds in reference to the whole in the same way as in the individual case. But a general view of his philosophy does not give us the impression of its being in

only as a purely historical phase, while as philosophy it was not only rejected, but indeed condemned, because it was an obstacle in the construction of a philosophical system.[45] It came out to confront reality instead of constituting reality.

Thus, it is not strange that for Hegel, an ideal system was one that was closed within itself and self-sufficient, and so, it did not to seek outside of itself for any other reality. At that point, anti-realism in name of treating philosophy as a system took on the character of a program, or indeed, an ideology. It was the final break from the sources of philosophical thought that had appeared in ancient Greece, the thought of which, almost by force and in purely mechanical fashion, was embodied in a system, but only at the level of its history, and in a phase that philosophy necessarily had to overcome.

Hegel measured the views of other philosophers according to his own measure, and he admonished that although we could speak of the system of Plato and Aristotle, they were not presented in the form of systems. For a thought to be a system, there must be one idea as a kind of leitmotif present in every instance of what philosophy is dealing with; one idea should be led through concrete things. Hegel defended himself against the charge of dogmatism from French philosophy, which translated the word '*système*' as dogma, and '*systèmatique* as dogmatism. Hegel said that this would be the case if we were to remain with one philosophy (that is, with one philosophical system), but systems change. In this way, Hegel imposed (a priori) a way of looking at the history of philosophy as a certain dynamic whole ruled by the laws of dialectic, and systems are parts of dialectic. Each system is at a higher stage than what came before it; it is an advance and something new. Hegel did not consider that the views of many philosophers had been based on very limited historical knowledge or numerous errors of interpretation (along with a philosopher's ignorance and errors).[46] Time would tell a philosopher's value and greatness.

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construction a self-systematized whole, of which the order and connection pertain likewise to the Notion; for the parts are empirically selected and placed together in such a way that each part is independently recognized as a determinate conception, without being taken into the connecting movement of the science"; Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 1:118.

45   "But although Aristotle's system does not appear to be developed in its parts from the Notion, and its parts are merely ranged side by side, they still form a totality of truly speculative philosophy," ibid. In the end, Hegel includes Aristotle under speculative philosophy, which never achieves the ideal of philosophy, which would have the shape of a system.

46   Hegel compares Aristotle's views with Plato's, and he admits, "it is difficult to give a more detailed account of the Aristotelian philosophy, the universal Idea with the more

What is new is always better, because the whole is ruled by the immanent laws of dialectic.

This scheme has left its mark on contemporary textbooks on the history of philosophy; an example of this would be how the systems of modern philosophy are considered to be an advance in relation to ancient times and the Middle Ages. The philosophical knowledge of many of the luminaries of modernity was limited to what they learned in gymnasium.[47] If Hegel's philosophy was the paradigm of a philosophical system, then by its example we can see to what degree the understanding and history of philosophy can be deformed.[48]

Schelling presented a somewhat different variety of idealism, but the fundamental idea—that system replaces reality—was just the same. Schelling directly admits that the purpose of his philosophical system is not to explain what reality is; on the contrary, he says that his system completely changes, and indeed, reverses the way of looking at things that is the rule in daily life and in the sciences.[49] Philosophy does not investigate concrete beings but is based on abstraction, which allows one to apprehend principles in their

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important elements, for Aristotle is much more difficult to comprehend than Plato. In the latter there are myths, and we can pass over the dialectic and yet say that we have read Plato; but with Aristotle we enter at once upon what is speculative. Aristotle always seems to have philosophized only respecting the individual and particular, and not to have risen from it to the thought of the absolute and universal, to the thought of God; he always goes from the individual to the individual"; ibid., 1:136. This description of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy is quite astounding. We can understand Plato without understanding dialectic, but with a knowledge of myth. In that case, the philosophy of Plato would be merely mythology, while in fact for Plato myths perform an auxiliary role in relation to dialectic. Aristotle in turn is accused of being too occupied with the concrete thing, but Aristotle remarked that the concrete thing as concrete cannot be known scientifically; it is ineffible (*individuum ineffabile*). It is also not true that Aristotle did not concern himself with the absolute and the divine, because, after all, Book XII of the *Metaphysics* concerns God.

47 Francis Bacon and Descartes may serve as examples.

48 The point is that Hegel preferred the conception of philosophy as a system that creates reality over the conception of philosophy as cognition that strives to discover the truth. For this reason, the way of discussing and evaluating philosophy that the second purpose, and it was precisely that sort of philosophy that arose in Greek culture, which would be deformed in Hegel's conception.

49 "That a system which completely alters and even overthrows the whole view of things prevailing, not merely in common life, but also in the greater part of the sciences, should encounter, despite the rigorous demonstration of its principles, a continuing opposition even among those in a position to feel or really to discern the force of its arguments"; Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (*1800*), trans. Peter L. Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978) 1.

highest generality, and where that which is individual disappears. Thus, that which is a concrete being also disappears. Abstractions dominate, and they become the object of philosophy. Since concrete reality disappears, the way truth is understood is also modified in a peculiar way. Truth is no longer the agreement of knowledge with reality. The truth is a property of a system, and truth itself consists in this, that it allows one to resolve problems that have not been resolved before, and it allows new problems to emerge.

The system of transcendental idealism is the development of knowledge from beginning to end. All the parts of philosophy constitute an uninterrupted whole, and philosophy is the progressive history of self-knowledge "whereby the self raises itself to the highest power of consicousness"[50] The starting point of the system (and of all reality) is what is subjective, while the reality of what is subject is subject to doubt.[51] Reason produced the assumption from which the entire system develops.[52]

Schelling completes the process of constructing the system of transcendental idealism. Here, a complete subjectivization of human knowledge occurs; this subjectivization is connected with a downgrading of the reality around us. The 'I' becomes absolutized. The category of time dominates the entire process of the development of the idea. By necessity, time puts each successive thought (each new system) in a position of superiority to what belongs to the past. Given Shelling's rejection of the realistic criteria of truth, his system takes on features that are self-reflective and beyond discussion, not only in its content, but also in how the past is evaluated. The philosophy of his predecessors is less valuable because a temporal divide determines the devaluation of that philosophy.[53]

In this way, the peculiar hubris, for want of a more delicate term, of German idealism reaches its apogee, and the conception of a philosophical system allows human knowledge to be completely separated from reality. As a result, the original meaning of the cultivation of philosophy as it was determined in Greek culture is completely rejected. A philosophical system in the version of the German idealists is an immanent thought that develops in the self and which brings forth a reality that is transcendent to humanity.

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50   Ibid., 2.

51   Ibid., 31.

52   Ibid., 118–119.

53   Philosophical systems can be considered chronologically, and thereby they occupy particular positions in time; that is, what is earlier must be found at a lower stage of development that what comes later; ibid., 2–3.

Here, we are dealing with the return of Neoplatonism, where the category of hypostasis is replaced with the concept of a system. The self is the counterpart of the supra-individual *nous* or intellect, before which it is established as its (and not transcendent) correlate; that is, a being-object. Afterward, the next hypostasis, which is the soul of the world, emanates from this intellect and being. In the case of German idealism, the Neoplatonic schema is considered in the framework of a system and becomes somewhat more complicated, but its general outline remains the same. The point is that, just as in Plotinus, the concept of the hypostasis had its own metaphysical power; so here, the concept of the system possesses such power. Systems are multiplied and written in time, and, in turn, they are generated and generate 'reality.' This process is necessary and is governed by the laws of dialectic. The concept of a system is thus not merely a category that refers to an organized whole, but it is a metaphysical category, or more precisely, it is an ontological category, since as a system, it possesses an effective power included in the process of the generation of a reality that is drawn out from the first self; the first self is somehow a counterpart of the One.

This is still the second subtext of the speculation of the German idealists. Gilson remarks that Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte treated philosophy like a work of art, because the purpose of philosophy was for them not knowledge but creation.[54] This perception is certainly accurate, although perhaps too cautious. For Hegel and Schelling, as we have seen, philosophy was not an art; that is, a form of intentional being. Philosophy was reality, not because it was art, but because it was a form of the Divine idea-spirit. Pantheism is what explains this astounding extravagance on the part of Hegel. On the one hand, this pantheism has Neoplatonic roots, and on the other hand, it has Gnostic roots. Right at the starting point, it is raised above reality and above philosophy. This is because insofar as philosophy evolved from human beings' original cognitive contact with the reality around them, the attempt to neutralize that attitude and reality implies that certain intellectual operations have already been carried out. Questions arise: What was their fundamental reference point? Why should it be called philosophy? Their starting point is not a primary source, and the operations are not original. In that case, what is the rational justification and condition for those operations? It is a kind of meta-knowledge that claims the right to make pronouncements about reality and about knowledge of reality. What is the basis for those claims? It seems that we must look for the answer no longer in philosophy (a certain version of Platonism), but in

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54   Gilson remarks that the systems of the German idealists are splendid, but they belong more to the realm of art than to the realm of philosophy; cf. *L'etre et l'essence*, 310.

para-philosophy, and that para-philosophy is Gnosticism. Hegel makes pronouncements about classical and realistic philosophy as if he were a Gnostic master who possessed occult wisdom that allowed him to pass sentences and evaluations while remaining for his own part above criticism.[55]

The concept of a system to describe knowledge that does not provide any knowledge about reality, but makes (or creates) that reality, was a substitute for magic; that magic was concealed behind such an approach and gave the whole the character of a quasi-logical structure, and thereby a quasi-scientific character.

A system is a body of organized knowledge, and the organization consists in this: at the beginning, certain fundamental theses are accepted, and from these step-by-step the next theses are drawn out. For the German idealists, the key problem was to discover such fundamental theses. Here, as it turned out, there cannot be many such theses, because there is no reality outside the system, there is only the reality that the system creates. It must be a thesis that is absolutely irrefutable and that justifies itself, since only such a thesis is a primary thesis. What is the thesis like? The thesis must meet three conditions, of which Karl L. Reinhold, the precursor of the great German idealists, writes:

> It must constitute itself, and so, it must be completely certain and universal; it must open a chain of successive theses, and some of these theses flow from others deductively until the whole achieves formal unity; it must form a closed circle, since the final thesis should lead to the first thesis.[56]

It was crucial to find the proper beginning. Fichte thought that the 'I' should be the beginning, because it justifies itself and from it further chains of knowledge can develop.[57] According to Fichte, the 'I' itself is apprehended in an intellectual intuition, in which it appears as pure and simple, independent of anything else, and so, the 'I' is literally the Absolute.[58] The 'I' is also the first object for itself, and so the 'I' is at the same time the subject and the object.[59] The subject and the object are not differentiated in the 'I.'[60] The principle of identity is realized in the 'I.'

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55   I wrote about the connections between Hegel and gnosis in my book, *Science in Culture*, Chapter 26.

56   Grosos, *Système et subjectivité*, 41, 88.

57   Ibid., 58.

58   This is the source meaning of the word Absolute: *ab-solutus*; that is, standing beyond all relations; ibid., 64.

59   Ibid., 69.

60   Ibid., 92.

The next step in the system is the principle of non-contradiction, which directs us toward the 'non-I,' when the 'I' is set in opposition to the non-I. Then we obtain the concept of the absolute object.[61] The third principle is the principle of reason, which allows us to go beyond the contradiction that occurs between the 'I' and the non-I. There are also the next two principles, the practical principle, when the 'I' is determined by the non-I, and the principle of causality, when the 'I' determines the non-I.[62]

The starting point and the foundation of the system is subjective (the 'I'). This subjectivity at the level of the positively understood 'I' is at the same time objectivity when the 'I' is for itself both subject and object. Objectivity, which is different from the 'I,' is constituted first in a relation to the 'I' as non-I. Without the 'I,' there would be no negation of the 'I'; that is, there would be no object. This means, on the one hand, that the 'I' becomes deified as the Absolute, and on the other hand, the entire world recognized by common sense as the world in itself is only an object constituted as the non-I.

In this way, we find ourselves at the antipodes of realistic knowledge: we do not know reality, but by thinking, we create reality. We do not begin by knowing the world such as it is found, but by knowing our own 'I'; the object of thought is not the world that is transcendent to us, it is not being qua being, but it is the object as object, the absolute object; that is, it is the negation of the 'I.' The concept of the object refers to nature, which is, thereby, in the framework of the system and by the scale of the system, something inferior to the 'I.' The subject or 'I' is the key to the system. The system thus understood is not only the formal organization of knowledge according to the hierarchy of assumptions, premises, and conclusions, but it is the constitution of reality on the basis of the subjectivity of the absolute 'I' and fundamental laws. The field of reality completes the subject and object; it completes the subject as the 'I,' and the object as the non-I. Subjectivity, here is the denial of subjectivism, because subjectivity is the strongest form of being, and it is the Absolute. Objectivity is the denial of realism, because the object is only the negative correlate of the subject-I.

The language of the idealistic philosophy of systems reverses previous meanings, both philosophical meanings (in the classical sense), and ordinary meanings (those of common sense). Philosophy prepared the ground for this change, and it was primarily ontology that prepared for the change, because it was in the framework of ontology that reality ceased to be the object of philosophical explanation. Meanwhile, the next phase would concern the problem of regaining reality, which given the ontological assumptions was

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61   Ibid.
62   Ibid., 70.

already impossible to achieve. Hence, they were tempted to try to create reality in the framework of philosophy understood as a system. Just as metaphysics is the act of knowing reality such as it is found, and ontology is the apprehension of concepts concerning reality, a system is an attempt to establish reality with the help of philosophy. The next phase would be the dismantling of philosophy as a system. The main problem is that each of these phases was regarded as necessary, although not in a historical sense. When the time of one phase passed, the time for new phase arrived. Because of this historical relativism regarded as a historical law, they did not consider the ahistorical dimensions of philosophy; that is, its truth-oriented dimensions. Shortcomings in education and understanding, and errors in interpretation were allowed by an appeal to the category of a new epoch or new phase.

The dismantling of philosophy, which had been reduced to a system, was a feature of subsequent currents, the final voice of which was postmodernism. That systemic philosophy has been identified with Western philosophy as a whole, and the critique of philosophy as a system has been treated as the critique of Western philosophy as such; no distinction had been made between ontology and metaphysics. As a result, there has been intellectual confusion because words such as philosophy, metaphysics, ontology, and system are used in very different senses.

We must then see how the concept of system is related to classical philosophy.

Whether Suárez was the Author of the First System of Metaphysics, and if so, in What Sense

Suárez's work on metaphysics has been regarded as the first system of metaphysics, although we know that the author did not use such a term. He called his work simply *Metaphysical Disputations* (*Disputationes metaphysicae*, 1579), not system of metaphysics. A question then arises: Why was the work later called a system? If this term was justified, then how should we understand this system?

The unique character of Suárez's work is that it departs from the tradition of many centuries whereby metaphysics was cultivated by commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* book-by-book. Suárez organized his *Disputationes* according to defined questions. Each disputation is devoted to a separate topic, and the sequence of topics is not accidental. In response to each question, many different positions are presented. Suárez analyzes those positions, and in the end, everything is inclined to one conclusion. All this gives the reader

the impression not only that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is no longer the main reference for disputations, but that Aristotle himself is no longer regarded as the most important authority. Metaphysics appears not as the work of one author but as a domain that possesses its own defined object and topical arrangement, and it is this as a whole that can be called a system.[63]

We must be careful in this presentation, because it only scratches the surface in terms of history and metaphysics. Suárez was not the first philosopher to develop metaphysics according to topics. Also, in previous commentaries, the positions of various philosophers were presented, not only Aristotle, and so, Aristotle did not need to have the final word. The third point is that Suárez's topical approach to metaphysics cannot be called a system in the modern sense, in the sense that the term was promoted by German scholastic metaphysics, or the German idealists, who felt the weight of both Descartes's philosophy and the cult of mathematics. If we can speak of a system in Suárez, then it is only in the sense that the philosophical questions that Aristotle had raised were arranged in a different way in this case. The absence of such an order or system in Aristotle was the result of the character of the work, which was not only innovative (because a new domain of philosophy was started), but which also had an aporematic character; that is, it was based on problems, and not based on a system.[64]

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63 "His *Disputationes metaphysicae* (Salamanca, 1597) was the first systematic treatment of metaphysics not based exclusively on the texts of Aristotle"; John W. O'Malley. *Ratio Studiorum*: *Jesuit Education 1540–1773*. It has been sometimes remarked that this is a second system of metaphysics after Aristotle: "*Francisco Suárez, primer autor desde Aristóteles que construye un sistema propio de Metafísica*" (Francis Suárez. The first author since the time of Aristotle who constructs his own system of metaphysics); Carlos Larrainzar, *Una introducción a Francisco Suárez* [An Introduction to Francisco Suárez] (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1977), 41. Such a comparison is very imprecise because we either understand a system in a modern sense, and then none of those authors were founders of metaphysics, or an ancient sense, and then there were very many more founders of systems. "*Disputationes metaphysicae (1597), donde repiensa toda la tradición especulativa anterior, sintetizando además la metafísica grecorromana como una disciplina autónoma e independiente. Puede considerarse este libro la primera construcción sistemática de la metafísica después de Aristóteles*" (Metaphysical disputations (1597), where all previous speculative tradition is rethought, synthesizing Greco-Roman metaphysics as a discipline that is autonomous and independent. This book can be considered as the first systematic construction of metaphysics since the time of Aristotle).

64 Aristotle's metaphysics also possesses its own order, which is determined by the problems presented by it in Book II, which is the book of aporias; cf. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 69–106.

Suárez was not the first to present metaphysics according to topics. Avicenna had already done this. He preferred another way of cultivating philosophy than writing commentaries.[65] His *Book of Knowledge* contained three domains (logic, metaphysics, and physics), which were handled according to topics. In his introduction, Avicenna explained that he was presenting in abbreviated form "the foundations and details of the five branches of knowledge" (including what is beyond nature, and would belong to metaphysics). Why did he take such an approach? Avicenna explained that he had been commanded to do so by Azad ad-Din Ala ad-Daula, who then reigned.[66] It is clear that didactic concerns came into play.

If it is a question of the arrangement of the questions, then Avicenna was the first to discuss the types of philosophical sciences (practical and theoretical), and then he described their object, including the object of metaphysics. After he established that absolute being as such is the object of metaphysics, he proceeded to analyze substances, and then accidents. Later on, he investigated causes, then act and potency, and then the necessary and the possible. The next topic of analysis is necessary being, then material bodies and motion, then generation and corruption. Thus, we have here metaphysics presented according the most important questions that were raised in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but in a different order.

Avicenna was not the only systematic philosopher. Averroes may be regarded as the second, especially in his short commentaries. In the long commentaries, he cited the entire text of Aristotle. In the middle commentaries, he cited the beginnings of propositions. In the short commentaries, he only discussed problems with no citations preceding them.[67] In the short commentaries, Averroes discussed particular metaphysical questions in his own words, as it were, and so, it was not a commentary either with respect to the content, nor with respect to arrangement. Why did the short commentary have such a form? It was not a question here of constructing a system, but, as in Avicenna, the approach was dictated by didactic concerns. Averroes thought that this way would be more effective in teaching the foundations of metaphysics.[68]

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65   C. D'Ancona Costa, "Commenting on Aristotle, 201; Courtine, *Suárez et le système la métaphysique*, 15.

66   Avicenna. *Księga wiedzy* [Book of Knowledge], trans. Bogdan Składanek (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974), 3.

67   Isaac Husik, "Averroes on the Metaphysics of Aristotle," The Philosophical Review 18, no. 4 (1909):416–428. doi: 10.2307/2177777.

68   D'Ancona Costa, *Commenting on Aristotle*, 233.

Neither the Arabs nor the Latins accepted this approach to metaphysics. The form of the long commentary persisted. It took this form because it had not yet been determined whether metaphysics as such was methodologically organized. They thought that metaphysics was a science in itself, while the commentary was a form perpetuated by a tradition from which they simply did not depart, unlike theology that, in the medieval period with respect to form, took an ordered form as it evolved from commentary on Sacred Scripture, through the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, through commentary on the *Sentences*, to the *Summa theologicae.*[69]

How, then does Suárez's metaphysical system appear? The complete title of his work is *Disputationes metaphysicae universam doctrinam duodecim librorum Aristotelis comprehendentes* (Metaphysical disputations containing the complete doctrine of the twelve books of [the *Metaphysics* of] Aristotle). It may seem that Aristotle would still be regarded here as the main authority in metaphysics, and that his *Metaphysics* was the main work. Was this really the case, or was it pro forma? To answer the question, we must see how the topics were set in order and how Suárez explained this question. The arrangement of the topics of the particular disputations was the result of Suárez's own thoughts. Here, we have in sequence the following disputations: the name and object of metaphysics (disp. 1); the conception of being (disp. 2); the properties of being (*passiones entis*), called the transcendentals in scholasticism (disp. 3–11); the causes of being (disp. 12–27); the division of being into infinite and finite (disp. 28); uncreated substance (disp. 29); the first being (disp. 30); the essence of finite being (disp. 31); substance (disp. 32–36); accidents (disp. 37–42); potency and act (disp. 43); habits (disp. 44); qualities (disp. 45–46); real relations (disp. 47); action (disp. 48); passion (disp. 49); the predicates time and place (disp. (50–52); *habitus* (disp. 53); and beings of reason (disp. 54).

We find the explanation for a new approach to the exposition of metaphysics in the introduction of the second disputation. There, Suárez explains that he will be dealing with the topics (*resque ipsas*) that wisdom (*sapientia*)

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69   There were three phases in the systematization of theology. The first phase was the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (1100–1164?), called the *Magister Sententiarum*; Lombard listed four questions: God, creation, sacraments, and Christ. Next, Peter Lombard's exposition was analyzed on the basis of philosophical principles (Bonaventure, Thomas, Scotus), and Thomas provided the whole with a very detailed degree of systematization, which we find in the *Summa Theologiae*. The third phase was the creation of a system by Suárez, which covered both theology and philosophy, and considered the position of the medieval masters; cf. Pereira, "The Achievement of Suárez and the Suárezianization of Thomism, 133–136. Of course, the conception of a system or super-system that Pereira used was introduced ex post facto, because Suárez for his own part did not use such concepts.

concerns, starting from Aristotle's text, which is uneven and has left many doubts and unanswered questions, and in which the beginning of metaphysics is not found until Book IV.[70] Therefore, to be more brief and concise, using the proper method (*Ut enim maiore compendio ac brevitate utamur, et convenienti methodo universa tractemus, a textus aristotelici prolixa explicatione abstinendum duximus*), he does not write a commentary as was customary up to that time, but he makes his own arrangement. Suárez emphasizes that although he will appeal to Aristotle and to his commentators (such as Alexander of Aphrodisia, Averroes, and especially Thomas), he will primarily investigate the problems themselves (*Rerum vero ipsarum examinationem in sequentibus disputationibus trademus*).[71]

In the new arrangement (*ordo doctrinae*), Suárez shifts the emphasis from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to metaphysics as such, metaphysics as a science, and in this sense, as Courtine remarks, he initiates a new understanding of metaphysics as a system.[72] I say that he only initiates it because we may speak here more of a system of metaphysics than of a metaphysical system. We may speak of a system because a specific order or arrangement comes into play here; that is, an order of topics, but it is not a metaphysical system created upon a syllogistic deductive model (J. Brucker) or a geometrical model (*more geometrico*, B. Spinoza). Suárez took the medieval theological summas as his model; they were not a parallel commentary on the biblical text but raised particular questions in a definite order.[73] This is confirmed by the structure and construction of each disputation. In the disputations Suárez keeps the elements typical of the medieval summa, such as the presentation of various opinions, the rejection of those that are recognized as wrong, and the presentation of his own opinion. There is no mention of searching for one principle from which everything could be drawn. Suárez does not raise such a problem at all because it is a problem that would first appear, especially with regard to metaphysics, because of Descartes.

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70 Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, IV, disp. II: "De ratione essentiali seu conceptu entis" (On the essential reason or the concept of being).

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., cf. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 326.

73 *Summa theologiae* is based on a plan in which the starting point and endpoint is God. After discussing God's existence and nature, Thomas then discusses angels, and then the things that were created in the six days of creation, including man (I). The second Part (I–II, and II–II) is devoted to man. The third Part (III) covers Christ and his role in the work of salvation, and the last part (*Supplementum*) concerns the sacraments and man's ultimate union with God.

In Suárez's plan, the reference point of metaphysics is not some universal and irrefutable principle from which we would deduce all the theses of the system. Things (*res ipsae*) are the reference points. Here, the main philosophical problem is reduced to this: how should this reality be understood? In Suárez's case, the question is this: to what school or movement does his metaphysics really belong?

The formal arrangement of topics in a specific order does not yet mean a choice for or against metaphysical realism. The question of the conception of being that is accepted becomes crucial. The center of gravity is the conception of being, and it would set the direction for how metaphysics would be treated in the context of the seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century philosophical and metaphysical systems. A metaphysical system is not only a matter of a particular arrangement of topics, but it is primarily a matter of a special internal logic that 'liberates' metaphysical knowledge from reality; that is, from being qua being. The *res ipsa* recedes to the background and is replaced by the thesis as a starting point; it does not matter what the sources for the thesis are.

In the framework of the systemic thought started in the seventeenth century, the center of gravity in metaphysical knowledge was shifted from the knowledge of being to the construction of a cognitive schema in which from one or several principles all assertions can be generated. This took on peculiar strength after the Cartesian revolution when the real world definitively ceased to be the object of knowledge, and ideas became the object of knowledge. Metaphysical knowledge did not have to take reality into account, but only ideas and the arrangement of ideas. Ideas could correspond to a reality that was transcendent to the knowing subject (Malebranche's parallelism, Leibniz's pre-established harmony); they could together co-create transcendent reality (Kant's apriorism), or even create it (German idealism), but the connection with reality would have less and less significance. The capacity of knowledge in the aspect of its internal structure became the most essential element of science, including metaphysics. The concept of a system began to mean not only ordered knowledge, but also and primarily integrally connected knowledge. That was the ideal of philosophical knowledge. Since the relation to reality became meaningless, they discovered a new role for philosophical systems, and their new task was to generate various models of reality. At this point, metaphysics was transformed into ontology, which does not so much investigate and explain reality as it becomes the intellectual exploration of possible worlds, which are neither the real world, nor real reality, and then starts to generate new worlds and a reality by the system.

Although the Suárezian conception of being contributed to the rise of ontology, and then to the rise of metaphysical systems, Suárez's metaphysics was

not yet a system in the modern or contemporary sense. Suárez was influenced both by Aristotle and Thomas, and he regarded being as the object of metaphysics. Although Suárez was inclined to replace being with the concept of being, the conception did not create being but still functioned in relation to reality. Thus, if Suárez has sometimes been regarded as the author of the first system of metaphysics; i.e., either the result of a very superficial understanding of his work, in which he indeed departed from the tradition of commenting on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but yet he did not give the impression that he intended to build a metaphysical system according to concepts such as those that have been formulated since the seventeenth century based on the idea of a system—or, we can speak of the beginnings of a system, although Suárez did not suggest or foresee that the concept would be developed in such a direction.[74]

We may think that Suárez would have been reluctant to go in that direction. This is seen in his attitude toward the problem of the unity of science, and that problem later became a discussion on science as a system. Suraez presents four different lines of thought to respond to this last matter. The first two lines of thought are the position of the late medieval nominalists, including Ockham and Gabriel Biel, who reduced science to coherence at a purely syntactic level; Suárez criticizes that position. He then discusses the view of Thomas, who said that the unity of science is based both on the unity of its formal object (the formal object refers to the essence of a thing), and the subjective habit (*habitus*) for knowing.[75] Suárez modifies that position, and then presents his own position, which is far from the treatment of science as an aggregate system understood in purely syntactic terms. His position also concerns metaphysics, which in the sense as it was later launched, as it were, is not a system, but a science.

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74   Many systematic (but not systemic) conceptions of philosophy and theology appeared from the first half of the sixteenth century following Suárez's model; cf. Marci à Baudunio, *Paradisus philosophicus ....* [Philosophical Paradise ....] (Massiliae: apud Claudium Garcin, 1664); Marci à Baudunio. *Paradisus theologicus* [Theological Paradise]. 2 vols. Lugduni, 1661–1663. OCLC: 421812919; John Punch. *Integer theologiae cursus ad mentem Scoti* [Integral theological course on the mind of Scotus]. Rome: 1652; Bartolomeo Barbieri. *Cursus theologicus ad mentem Scoti* [Theology Course on the Mind of Scotus]. Paris, 1678; Crescentius Krisper. *Philosophia scholae scotisticae* [Philosophy School of Scotus]. Augustae Vindelicorum, 1735); Krisper. *Theologia scholae scotisticae* [Scotus's School of Theology], 4vols. Augustae Vindelicorum, 1728–1729); Alexandre Piny. *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus* [Thomistic theological course], 3 vols. Madrid 1637), *Cursus theologicus thomisticus* [Thomistic theological course], 4 vols. Lyon, 1663; cf. Pereira, *The Achievement of Suárez and the Suárezianization of Thomism*, 137.

75   Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 288.

To summarize, it is difficult to regard Suárez as the precursor of metaphysical systems, because his approach to metaphysics is essentially different from the conception present in the framework of metaphysical systems. At most we should recognize that Suárez contributed to the metaphysical autonomy of metaphysics because he replaced the traditional commentary form with an arrangement of topics. That arrangement does not have a syllogistic structure in which we would add premises one after another, because if reality is the object of metaphysics, then at every stage, reality must be present, and it must be present in a transcendental dimension.

What Sort of Realistic Metaphysics?

If we work with the concept of the system, we must determine whether we are considering here the classical meaning derived from ancient Greek, or the modern meaning, which appeals to the structure of a certain kind of knowledge, namely, mathematical knowledge. Much depends on what we regard as the object of metaphysics. The transition to the mathematical model typically happens when reality ceases to be the object, and the concept of reality becomes the object. That is not all, because the concept must be properly purified; that is, the concept must be made univocal, because only univocity would allow us to perform the deductive operations that constitute the foundation of a system in the mathematical and syllogistic sense. Equivocity and analogy in this approach are treated as errors, and so, they cannot be incorporated into a system. The criteria for systematic knowledge are a sort of a priori assumptions either imposed on reality or generated by reality, but in any case, must in the end, deform the image of the reality that we know. Why must the concept of system thus understood determine the scientific character of metaphysical knowledge and determine what is and what is not reality?

The context, which includes the history of science, comes into play here. On the one hand, with regard to the reorientation of the purpose of scientific knowledge from theoretical to utilitarian aims, mathematics has come to be regarded as the highest and most exemplary type of knowledge. On the other hand, conflicts in civilization come into play. It is a question of how Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism entered Western culture in the Renaissance by way of Eastern civilizations, especially by way of Egyptian culture (Hermeticism) and Jewish culture (the Cabala) as opposed to Christianity, or regarded as superior to Christianity.[76] The methodology of scientific knowledge restricted the

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76   I wrote of this in *Science in Culture*, Chap. 23.

conception of the scientific to mathematics as the only type of knowledge of a scientific character; only knowledge that could be expressed by numbers, or by the same structure, namely, a system was regarded as scientific, because mathematical knowledge is the best suited to a systemic approach, and that approach belongs to the nature of mathematical knowledge.

What is to be done when reality is not a system in a mathematical sense? Does this mean that reality cannot be known, or at least that it cannot be known in a scientific sense? This would be a gross misunderstanding, because the methods and model of knowledge should be adapted to the object. Why are we doomed to only one way of understanding a system? In its original meaning, the word 'system' indicates a reality that is organized in such a way that it constitutes a unity. That is a system, and the right example is not a dead system of numbers, or propositions in a syllogism, but a living animal, or a human being composed of body and soul. This is a system that refers to the reality of a real being, and that unity is expressed in various aspects by all the transcendentals: being, thing, unity, separateness or distinctness, the true, the good, and the beautiful.

A system in this sense encompasses both reality and its non-univocal (non-homogeneous) manifestations, which nevertheless, are analogical, when the relation comes into play, of elements that cannot be reduced to one another, but which form a unity of being (matter-form, body-soul, essence-existence).

At present, in the realistic current of classical philosophy, it is called to attention that the starting point of metaphysics is not a single principle or thesis, not even several principles or theses, but really existing being. Being appears as a system as analogically understood. Being is the system, and so, it constitutes an analogical unity in the horizontal and vertical dimension.

In the metaphysical dimension, one expression of this organization, and not of chaos or univocity, is the fact of the existence of being; that is, the irreducible proportionality between essence (content) and existence. Here, the metaphysical systematic character of being is expressed in its fundamental character (analogy within a being). This systematic character is also present in a plurality of beings (analogy between beings). Thereby, not only is a particular individual being a system, but many beings form a system. All the more, the whole of being stands in causal relations to the Absolute (as the efficient, exemplar, and final cause).

In this context, metaphysical knowledge becomes a system when it adheres to its object, being, which is a system. The primary and major analogue for the concept of a system is a being, not a structure or arrangement taken in itself of scientific theses arranged according to the model of a deductive system.[77]

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77   Maryniarczyk, *System metafizyki*, 46–75.

Deduction covers only the quantitative or univocal-denotative aspect of being. The wealth of being is not exhausted in this, and it is not what is most important for being.

When being is the object of metaphysical knowledge, this does not mean that the structure of that knowledge is chaotic. The structure of the knowledge, like being itself, is ordered in an analogical way, and the metaphysical cognition of being is performed in constant cognitive contact with being (existential judgments). Such knowledge is science understood precisely as a *habitus*.[78]

Realistic metaphysics does not aspire to be isolated from being in order to create a deductive system independent of reality. Such an approach would eliminate the meaning of the cultivation of metaphysics, the object of which is really existing being, and that object cannot be apprehended in any cognitive acts except existential judgments. The concept of a system cannot be prior to being as the main object of metaphysical knowledge. When being is the object of metaphysics, then an entirely different conception of a system emerges, a system that is realistic, open, autonomous, and coherent.[79] However, this is not in isolation from really existing reality, and it is not in the manner of deduction, as deduction is univocally understood.

The concept of a system modeled on deduction is ideal for ontology. This is true whether in a nominalistic version, where at the starting point a univocal concept of being is accepted, and upon the canvas of that concept the principles are described that allow the deduction of the other theses or elements, or in an idealistic version, when the system is not only the structure of a particular science, but is indeed the creator of reality. Nominalism and idealism essentially deform the concept of a system because instead of bringing the knowing subject closer to reality, they take it further away from reality to seek a real return, no longer at the level of knowledge, but in other domains of culture such as art, politics, or religion. Then those domains are not closely connected with their proper objects, such as the beautiful, the good, or God; but in different ways, they strive to create truth, which, because truth is a priori, leads to the imposition of a system or anti-system, but is not a theoretical harmonization of our knowledge with the being that surrounds us.

Critique of Philosophy as a System—But What Sort of System?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, philosophy understood as a system began to encounter increasingly frequent criticism. The criticism either

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[78]   Maurer, "The Unity of a Science," 274.

[79]   Maryniarczyk, *System metafizyki*, 279–311.

led to the proposal that philosophy should be practiced non-systematically, or, that philosophy should be replaced by another type of knowledge; for example, the type present in art. Those proposals were certainly interesting, found wide approval, and became part of the history of philosophy, but they strained the status of philosophy too much, and this necessarily led to the fall of the prestige of philosophy in society and civilization. Therefore, in this case, also we should describe how the system understood as such was criticized.

Søren Kierkegaard was one of the critics of systemic philosophy. In his early work, *Either-Or*, he showed how the Cartesian doubt differed from his own philosophy, which was based on doubt:

> Doubt is thought's despair; despair is personality's doubt. That is why I cling so firmly to the defining characteristic 'to choose'; it is my watchword, the nerve in my life-view, and that I do have, even if I can in no way presume to have a system.[80]

Thus, Kierkegaard departs from a system that would be anchored in the fact that it could not be put in doubt, but he is interested in despair as a state in which human beings can discover knowledge of life. Life should be the object of philosophy when, "doubt is an internal feature of the very process of thought, and in its doubt it is preserved as impersonally as possible."[81] In this case, is Kierkegaard not only uninterested in systemic thinking, but also uninterested in theoretical knowledge, because he would like knowledge to be more involved in humanity's existence? It is difficult to answer this question because Kierkegaard knew philosophy only in the version of German idealism and did not consider the passion that goes with theoretical knowledge, the aim of which is to know truth. Perhaps this is because German idealism, like a thought separated from reality and its creative function is not taken under consideration. To revive this "tranquil, logical, and objective thought," Kierkegaard exchanges doubt for despair. He explains:

> Despair is precisely a much deeper and more complete expression; its movement is much more encompassing than that of doubt. Despair is an expression of the total personality, doubt only of thought.[82]

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80   Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, eds./trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 211.

81   Ibid.

82   Ibid. 212.

Of course, despair can be deeper than thinking, but in philosophy as it was classically understood, there is still the question of what the object of despair is: despair can initiate the act of knowing, but despair as such is not knowledge, and especially not theoretical knowledge. Despair fundamentally refers to human existence, and metaphysics is the knowledge of being qua being. So it may be said that the reduction of philosophy to a system in the German version bore fruit in Kierkegaard's reaction, which went beyond a system and beyond philosophy. Thereby, sensitivity to humanity and its special existential situation increased, and a system would necessarily lose sight of humanity's existential situation. To be sure, this does not mean that human beings can be studied apart from a system and in the framework of philosophy; human beings can be studied in the framework of philosophical anthropology that, while it remains a kind of theoretical knowledge, is open to human beings in their individual and unrepeatable existence, which is the existence of each's personal being. In the historical context, the critique of philosophy as a system was not because knowledge had been separated from reality as such, but because the system lost sight of the unrepeatable existence of each person as a person. This provoked the rise of existentialism, which saw in each human being, a being that no system sees. Human beings appear not only as beings, but as special beings.

At present, the postmodernists primarily make a programmatic critique of philosophy as a system. They strike at the most sensitive point of a system, which is the 'I,' on the basis of which, since the time of Descartes, an entire system could be built. Meanwhile, the postmodernists say that there is no central and transcendental 'I,' but only different egological orders and these are not coordinated with one another.[83] This also means that the starting point fails in the construction of the system, and that the human being is destroyed as a subject and as a person.[84] Human beings also cease to be beings, becoming

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83 "The postmodernist vision, which questions the unity and universality of norms of transcendental rationality, is aimed first of all at the fundamentalist status of the transcendental and general dimension of the 'I.' It attempts to replace this dimension with a non-synthesizable plurality of egological orders, which co-exist in the human individual, that are ruled by their own rules, rules that establish their own semantics and their own symptomatics, and which exclude the superiority of any personal center that would retain its own identity"; cf. Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, 81.

84 If a human individual is not a subject and person, then the objective foundation of human rights must collapse. This opens the way for a politics of postmodern totalitarianism. In the name of what sort of philosophical reasons do postmodernists recognize as atrocities the German atrocities of the Second World War if man is not a person?

only a "structure of self-complicating signs."[85] It is hard to imagine a greater depersonalization and dehumanization of the human being.

In turn, the postmodernist attack on the *Logos* (reason) has to contribute to the ruin of the entire intellectual system as it constitutes, after all, the bare bones of a system. The critique of the *Logos* is a deeper matter than a critique of deductive reasoning alone, which unites the whole of the system. The point is that reason is deprived of its fundamental abilities to grasp being in the aspect of the most important principles, which are the principles of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, and sufficient reason (reason for being). This is because only from these principles we can then move on to build systems, but these principles are originally the cognitive (and rational) expression of reality itself. If this first contact with reality is undermined, then, in fact, even deductive reasoning, which is transparently clear in its logic, can be treated as inconclusive on account of the dubious character of the assumptions, or on account of the tautological character that only seems to enrich reality but does not. For this reason, we must look at the *Logos* integrally; that is, through the prism of the intellect's relation to reality.

The attempt to reject the concept of a system as such in order to proclaim a program of anti-systemic thought comes from the conception of a system that has been restricted to the mathematical model and reworked for the use of philosophy. However, just as Hegel's system does not exhaust the conception of a system, so the anti-systemic program cannot lead to the negation of metaphysical, theoretical, and realistic knowledge; at most it is a negation of the Hegelian system of philosophy or the Hegelian conception of a system. We must develop the *habitus* of harmonizing our cognitive acts with being, which is a system, and whose analogical structure cannot lead to futile univocity, but preserves the entire wealth and openness that constitute for the human intellect an inexhaustible source of knowledge.

A mathematical conception of a system, or one modeled upon a mathematical conception, cannot be applied to realistic metaphysics, because metaphysical knowledge is permeated by analogy. Analogy in systemic knowledge is regarded as an error, but metaphysical knowledge has reality as its object, and existence is a constitutive element of reality. Our knowledge of existence cannot be separated from real existence, which is affirmed precisely in existential judgments, and not in concepts. Metaphysical knowledge requires constant contact with existing reality, while a system separates knowledge from reality.

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85   "The place of man thus understood is taken over by structures of self-complicated signs and streams of never-ending references beyond themselves lacking any original source or ultimate end"; ibid., 82.

If one were to say that a system were to generate reality, that would be an evident confusion of intentional existence with real existence. The reality generated by a system is intentional reality, and not real. What domain, then, would take the place of the knowledge of real reality?

The modern and contemporary cult of system does not help us gain metaphysical knowledge; it is a trap to make such knowledge unreal. As well, the critique of systemic knowledge as it occurs in currents that are almost para-philosophical (existentialism) or in postmodernism, is a critique that appeals to the conception of a system as that concept began to function in modern times, and so, in metaphysics, then, to be transformed into a mega-system that encompassed all domains of culture and reality, but as these were understood in an idealistic way (German idealism). The postmodernist demolition of philosophy and system does not encompass metaphysics, because postmodernism restricts the scope of philosophy to modern and contemporary philosophy. All the more we should analyze precisely which paradigms of philosophical knowledge are being attacked, and which should be defended, if philosophy is to be saved for the sake of the Western culture.

Ontology and Logical Systems

Besides the strictly philosophical systems, logical systems appeared in the twentieth century, which were called ontologies by their authors. Stanisław Leśniewski regarded his system of logic as such an ontology. An ontology differs both from the mereology built from it and from protothetic. Mereology was a formal system belonging to set theory. Protothetic was the classical logical calculus, which was a generalization of the classical propositional calculus. Ontology, however, is the generalization of the classical predicate calculus, and, taken in a very broad sense, the calculus of names. This ontology was built upon prothetic; that is, upon the logical calculus. Why was this system called an ontology? It was called that because Leśniewski thought the system not only met the conditions of logical correctness, and so, it was not contradictory, but that it also contained the fundamental laws of reality itself.[86]

Leśniewski's approach, which is interesting and important from the point of view of logic, is an example of an attempt to extrapolate purely logical solutions (which are univocal and formalized) to reality, but a theory of reality is not and cannot be constructed in the framework of logic. At the starting point, where the object and method are determined, logic is based on assumptions

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86   S. Kiczuk, "Leśniewski Stanisław." In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, 6:344–345.

that have their own metaphysical dimension, and logic cannot be indifferent to those assumptions. The entire procedure of formalization and univocity already determines the field of that to which this ontology can be applied and that to which it cannot be applied.

In this circumstance, the entire scope of reality, which does not fit into the framework of the laws of ontology, ceases to be recognized as reality. This is true also of the word 'is,' which, in Leśniewski's theory, is explained in three ways: it is a propositional copula (Socrates is a man), in an existential sense (Justice is), and as a part of a functor or operator (each man is mortal).[87] The meaning of 'is' that is most important for metaphysics in an existential sense, refers here to an abstract concept that is situated with difficulty in reality, especially since one does not know what reality is, and to what in the structure of reality this 'is' corresponds. Hence, Leśniewski's system can be called an ontology, but only an ontology. It cannot be called a metaphysics, which means that this system cannot be applied to reality without considering metaphysics, which is neither a logical system nor an ontology.

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87   P. Kulicki, "Leśniewskiego systemy" [Leśniewski's systems]; ibid., 6:345–348.

Univocity or Analogy?

The confrontation between metaphysics and ontology becomes especially sharp when the question is whether being (the concept of being) is understood univocally or analogically. Ontology leans toward univocity, while metaphysics leans toward analogy. This is clearly seen in the controversy over the choice between unity and plurality that took place at the dawn of Greek philosophy. Parmenides understood being univocally, hence, for him, true being was being that was absolutely simple and at the same time unique, because such a being is absolutely univocal, while plurality was only illusory, because plurality was equivocity. Plato followed the path of Parmenides; he also understood being univocally, and so, as a result, when he wanted to explain plurality and change in the sensibly known world, he thought that the sensible world was not non-being as Parmenides had thought, but that it was a mixture of being and non-being. Therefore, Plato recognized non-being as it was univocally understood as the negative counterpart of the univocal understanding of being. The material world was a mixture of being with non-being.[1]

Aristotle criticized both solutions. His concern was to salvage realism, and to do so in a philosophical way; that is, in an intellectually justified way. If univocity leads to a real loss of reality in the concept of being because it leads human knowledge away from the world that surrounds us, in turn, equivocity makes it impossible to know this world, especially in a scientific way. Equivocity means a plurality that cannot be reduced to any one thing, and in connection with this the plurality, as it cannot be comprehended by one object or one concept, cannot constitute the object of one science. The problem was, therefore, a serious one. Aristotle found a solution. He appealed to analogy. Analogy allowed him to recognize the world around him as a real being and allowed his knowledge of the world to be scientific knowledge. This is because analogy, while it preserves plurality (heterogeneity), at the same time, it contains something that is one.

Before Aristotle, analogy was known primarily among Pythagoreans, particularly in the domain of mathematics. Archytas mentioned harmonic, arithmetical, and geometric analogy. Harmonic analogy referred to music, arithmetical analogy included a mathematical series where the same intervals are kept between numbers, and geometrical analogy was proportionality, which expresses

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1   Plat., *Soph.* 256d.

the same relation that occurs between two pairs of numbers. To be more precise, geometric analogy meant an arrangement of terms that could help to determine irrational numbers; that is, numbers that cannot be understood directly.[2] Since for the Pythagoreans, numbers were the principle of being, in turn, harmony found its analogical reflection in the macrocosm and the microcosm. This is because harmony expressed unity in variety, as harmony in the universe, the rule of law in the state, and a prudent way of life in the home.[3]

Plato appealed to analogy not only in mathematics, especially when it was a question of determining the relation of the elements that constitute the building material of the cosmos on a macroscopic and microscopic scale, but also with regard to other types of knowledge, and in relation to the similarity that is typical of the functions performed by two different things. Analogy was the same for him as it was for the Pythagoreans, namely, it was harmony. It is present in the human body and in the cosmos.[4] Plato did not reduce being to number because his image of reality was richer than the Pythagorean vision. Numbers filled the middle sphere between the material world and ideas. Although various types of knowledge refer to different spheres, Plato here spoke as well of analogy, because just as unchanging being (οὐσία) is related to what comes into being (*genesis*), so intellectual knowing (*noesis*) is related to opinion (*doxa*).[5] Analogy also allowed Plato to approximate the relation between the Good and knowledge, because an analogical relation occurs between the sun and vision.[6]

To summarize, Plato knew analogy and often appealed to it, but at the level of speculation concerning being and not one of the spheres of being. Plato was more inclined toward univocity. When he tried to explain the fact of motion and the fact that there are differences between beings, he said that not only being, but also non-being must stand behind these facts.[7] This is because, in a motion, there is something that does not exist but which will come to be, and which did not exist before. Likewise, variety indicates non-being; that is, it indicates what something is not while it is what it is.[8] According to Plato, in

2   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 255–256.

3   Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematica*, 1; quoted in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki.1* [The History of Aesthetics.1], 3rd ed. (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2009), 1:103.

4   Plat., *Tim.* 31b–32c, 53c, 69b; Plat., *Rep.* 509d–511e, 534a; Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 256.

5   Plat., *Rep.* 509b, 510a, 534a.

6   Ibid., 508b.

7   Plat., *Soph.* 256d–e.

8   Ibid., 258e.

the case of variety, we must be dealing with a mixture of being and non-being.[9] However, a being is something in itself that is different from non-being and variety.[10]

Plato's position is intelligible and consistent, but only given the assumption that being is understood univocally. The cost of introducing non-being as a principle that explains motion and variety is that non-being is introduced into reality, which seems to be a solution paradoxical enough to be untenable. On the other hand, being itself is separated from variety, but variety is a fact of being. Such a separation of being from reality was caused precisely by univocity. To summarize, when Plato tried to explain the fact of change and the fact of plurality, he could not do so with the help of the concept of being, since that was a univocal concept. In that case, since it was univocal, it was not suited for explaining reality as a whole, because reality is not univocal.

Aristotle found a way out of this impasse by the analogical conception of being. Change is the passage from potency to act. Here, a twofold understanding of being appears: as potency, and as act. This is not a completely equivocal understanding of being, because potency and act remain closely connected: act is the fulfillment of what is found in potency, and motion is the passage from potency to act. The theory of act and potency allowed him to resolve the paradox of change, which had either been denied (Parmenides), or explained in terms of non-being (Plato), which was a pseudo-solution. The theory of act and potency is already an analogical conception of being because it contains a difference (that which is in potency is not yet in act), but also contains a similarity (potency is subordinated to act, while non-being is not ordered to anything). This theory also allowed Aristotle to explain variety without resorting to non-being. In this case, potency was connected with matter, and act was connected with form. According to Aristotle, matter was the principle of variety within the same species, while at the level of many species, species differ with respect to form. Thus, with the help of the principles of being that he discovered, Aristotle, in the framework of the language of being, and so, without introducing non-being, worked to resolve two of the most important philosophical questions, the questions of motion and variety. But that was not the end of the matter. A problem appeared. How should being qua being be understood?

Variety at the level of material individuals was explained by matter (immaterial beings differ only by form and are as separate species). In turn, variety at the level of the form-species was reduced to difference at the level

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9   Ibid., 259a.
10   Ibid., 259b.

of categories of being, also called the highest genera. They include substance, quantity, quality, relation, etc. Aristotle thought that there were ten such fundamental categories. A problem arose here. If they are the highest genera and essentially different from each other, then how can one concept of being be formed on their basis? After all, substance is not quantity, and quality is not relation. Here, analogy again came to the rescue. This time, it was analogy *prós hén*, later called analogy of attribution. Between the categories, there is both an order in being and an order in knowledge to one of the categories, namely, to substance. The other categories are beings, since they are in various ways properties of substances, and as a result, although being is understood in many ways, it is understood in an order to something that is one. This was analogy *prós hén* or *eph' henós*.[11]

Aristotle also knew the analogy of proportionality within being; that analogy included the relations between the components of being. Here, he was concerned with the relation of form to matter, the relation of act to potency, which, in an analogical way, is realized in every composite being.[12] The analogy of attribution was crucial for Aristotle because that analogy allowed him to overcome both equivocity and univocity at the level of being as such.

If Aristotle spoke of *prós hén* as a way of being, then the commentators on Aristotle, beginning with Alexander of Aphrodisia, primarily emphasized analogy as a way of predication, and so, they connected analogy with the mode of human knowledge, situating it between univocity and equivocity.[13] This was the path that Clement of Alexandria and Porphyry took.[14] The *Categories* was a decisive influence on the thinking of those Greek commentators. As we recall, the *Categories* was treated as the key to Aristotle's entire philosophy, and since it was an earlier work than the *Metaphysics*, it did not concern being directly, and it also mentioned nothing about analogy.[15] It concerned modes of predication, which the commentators connected with the analogy of attribution. As a result, the emphasis in the treatment of analogy was shifted from being to knowledge.

As for the Arab philosophers, Averroes returned to the being-oriented treatment of the analogy of attribution and added additional refinements and

11   Arist., *Met.* 1003a 20–1005a 17.
12   Ibid., 1070b 37–1071b 4.
13   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 295.
14   Ibid., 294–304.
15   On the influence of the *Categories* on the metaphysics of neo-Platonic commentators, see this book, pt. 1, Chap. 3.

precision to how it was understood.[16] Avicenna worked with a univocal concept of being, but he did not use the terms 'univocity' or 'analogy.' He thought that the concept of being was different from the generic concepts; that is, the concept of being was not univocal in the categorical sense, although it was still univocal.[17]

Thomas made a broad presentation of the theory of analogy. That theory, at many points, enriched Aristotle's theory, and this is mainly in connection with a new conception of being. Thomas's theory most clearly contained the features that would set it apart from Scotus's theory, and consequently allow us to see clearly the difference between metaphysics and ontology. In a word, ontology arose on the basis of a univocal conception of being, while metaphysics would keep its identity because of analogy. Therefore, it is very important to present clearly the difference between the positions of Thomas and Scotus.

In Thomas's views, along with traditional lines of thought that belong to the continuing peripatetic tradition, in which we hear of the analogy of attribution at the level of predication as something between univocity and equivocity, new emphases appear, in which Thomas appeals to his own existential conception of being.

Thomas distinguishes between conceptual analogy (*secundum intentionem*), the analogy of being (*secundum esse*), and analogy that combines the first two (*secundum intentionem et esse*). Conceptual analogy is the counterpart of the analogy of attribution, when we predicate a content of several designates, but it belongs only to the first designate in a proper way. Health is a property of an organism, while other designates are called healthy (for example, nourishment or air) only because they are connected in various ways with the health of an organism, but in themselves they do not contain a content that belongs to the concept of health. That analogy implies the presence of predication, which is a human cognitive act.

The analogy of being refers only to being and does not presuppose the presence of cognitive acts. In being itself there is an analogy, which is the expression of the variety and inequality of being, and it does so at the level of individuals that can be apprehended univocally in the framework of predication. Although we predicate concepts such as horse or dog in a univocal way of many individuals that belong to the same species, those individuals are separate and distinct with respect to being, and so, between them there is an analogy, not univocity, since univocity would mean identity.[18]

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16   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 304–306.

17   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 22–23.

18   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 315–318.

The analogy that connects in itself the two preceding analogies includes the way of predication and of being that contains in the order of knowledge, and in the order of reality, non-univocity and inequality; this is especially apparent in the case of the transcendentals. Here, we cannot produce a single precise concept of being, the good, or the true, because the differences between particular beings are inexhaustible.[19] The last analogy is extremely important for metaphysics because it opens the way for the knowledge of being qua being in its analogical variety.

In the framework of entitative-conceptual analogy, which is also called the analogy of proportionality or the analogy of composite proportions, we should distinguish between analogy based on categorical designates, and analogies in which the transcendentals are present. Although the structure of both types of analogy is the same, they are still different on account of the genus of the elements that occur in them. For metaphysics, transcendental analogy is the most important because it encompasses being qua being.[20] In this analogy, the particular transcendentals—such as being itself, then the thing, unity, separateness or distinctness, the true, the good, and the beautiful—appear, and we emphasize what constitutes the special perfection for each pair of proportions. In the case of the transcendental being, that would be existence, which occurs in every being, but as separate and of different intensity. As a stone is to its existence, so is a human being to its existence, and so on, in turn, all the way to God. Each being as a being must exist in order to be a being, but one existence is not equal to another existence. Also, each existent thing is singular and unrepeatable, and therefore, we must speak of analogy, not of univocity.[21] This is because at the level of nature or essence, species or genus, and even at the level of the concept of being as a concept (which refers to a common nature), but without considering existence, we are dealing with univocity. Only existence understood as an act cannot be 'made common,' and for this reason, existence preserves the analogical character of being itself, our knowledge of being, and the expression of being.

19   Ibid., 315–317.

20   Ibid., 331–336.

21   "*cum in re duo sit considerare: scilicet naturam vel quidditatem rei, et esse suum, oportet quod in omnibus univocis sit communitas secundum rationem naturae, et non secundum esse, quia unum esse non est nisi in una re*" (in a thing, two [aspects] have to be considered, namely, the nature or the essence of a thing, and its existence; it is necessary that in all [things], community according to the reason for nature is univocal, but not according to existence, since a given existence is present only in one thing); Aquinas, *Scriptum Super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, I. disp. 35. Q1. Art. 4. resp.; cf. Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses*, 293.

Despite differences at the level of existence, we cannot speak of complete equivocity in our understanding of being, because in each composite being, existence performs the same role of perfecting the essence.[22]

In short, this is how Thomas's conception of analogy appears. We see how analogy as such is understood analogically. It allows us to relate analogy both to the order of knowledge and to the order of being, and therefore, analogy is crucially important for metaphysics, for which the object is supposed to be the knowledge of being.

Scotus took a different approach than Thomas to the problem of analogy, because he was working with a different conception of being and a different conception of knowledge.

We can see two phases in the thought of Scotus. In the first phase, he investigated analogy in terms of logic, and in the second phase, he did so from a metaphysical point of view. There is an important difference between these approaches. As a logician, Scotus held to the traditional distinction between univocity, equivocity, and analogy. Analogy could be based on a common content (a principle, a cause) that belongs to various beings. It could also be what belongs to things in different degrees, and so, primarily (*per prius*) or secondarily (*per posterius*); that is, it can belong to one thing as a cause, and to other thing as an effect. Finally, analogy can appear where a thing is described in a proper way (*proprie*), and another thing is described in an improper way (*improprie*).[23]

Scotus looked to the various types of analogies that he mentioned and studied whether the term 'being' was located in them. The first type of analogy is univocity, because despite a difference of degree, it refers to the same content. The second type of analogy must be rejected, because even though it is close to the analogy of attribution, Scotus thinks of primacy or priority in temporal terms and not in terms of being; hence, it cannot be the analogy of attribution. In the third type of analogy we are dealing with equivocity, since something is predicated only of one thing in a proper way.[24]

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22   This unique role of existence in the order of the analogy of being has its counterpart in truth-oriented cognition, since truth is ultimately based on existence: "*veritas fundatur in esse rei magis quam in quidditate, sicut et nomen entis ab esse imponitur*" (the truth is founded more in a thing's existence than in its essence, as the noun 'being' is derived from the infinitive 'to be'); Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, I. disp. 19. Q5. Art. 1. resp.; cf. Faucon de Boylesve, *Être et savoir*, 11.

23   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 349–350.

24   Ibid.

Since the first type of analogy is univocity, it cannot be referred to being taken in the context of the categories. Being is predicated of each category essentially and directly. Being is also not located in the second and third type of analogy. Thus in logic, the concept of being is equivocal.

How is it in metaphysics? Here, in both metaphysics and in the philosophy of nature, being is regarded as analogical.[25] Being, and not our knowledge of being, is regarded as analogical, because being as known by metaphysics and apprehended under the form of a concept is univocal. Scotus says that the concept of being is univocal and cannot be otherwise. Here, in particular, Thomas and Scotus completely part ways.

Why did Scotus think that the concept of being was univocal? He had several reasons. The concept of being was formed for the use of metaphysics, which was treated as a deductive system. As a result, univocity had to be at the starting point, since analogy could not constitute a principle for performing deductive operations. This primary thesis had to contain virtually all the theses that would be deduced from it, and the primary thesis itself was the reason for the unity of the science and of the object of the science. For precisely this reason, the concept of being as the starting point of metaphysics, had to be univocal.[26] Hence, the concept of being insofar as it was univocal could be used in syllogisms as a middle term.[27] The concept of being had to be univocal so that it could encompass all beings, both infinite and finite, uncreated and created. Only then could the concept be called a common being, or *ens commune*. Such a concept of being is the primary and original concept of the intellect, and it is known essentially. Human knowledge does not begin from the apprehension of a concrete thing, but in a general way (*species speciallissima*) and vaguely (*confuse*); we next acquire knowledge distinctly (*distincte*); that is, we apprehend the essential elements of things expressed in definitions. Here, the concept of being is the first concept. This concept of being is grasped abstractly, not intuitively. As undetermined, it can refer to any being, with the exception of nothingness.[28] The essence of being is, for Scotus, something in itself, independent of real being, and independent of being in the intellect, in

25   Ibid., 352.

26   Ibid., 355.

27   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 38. The possibility of using the concept of being as a middle term in a syllogism opened the way for the construction of an entire ontology as a deductive system, which took place in modern philosophy. Suárez also emphasized the role of a univocal concept of being in the structure of deduction; cf. Hoeres, "Francis Suárez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis." In Ryan and Bonansea, *John Duns Scotus 1265–1965*, 274.

28   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 41–42.

the same way that Avicenna treated essence (but not the essence of being, but rather that of a species).[29]

The concept of being as undetermined can be related to all the manifestations of being, both to finite being and to infinite being, to concrete being and general being, because in each of them, the essence of being must be present, and the essence of being is non-contradiction.

The essence of being, thus understood, is prior to the division of beings into categories, including the category of substance. The concept of being is the first concept that we apprehend as different from nothingness. Being is not nothing. This is the first apprehension of being according to Scotus.[30] This conception must be completely univocal, pre-categorical, but only opposed to nothingness because it is non-contradiction, while nothingness would be contradiction.

Univocity does not concern real being but concerns our mode of knowledge: we apprehend being as the object of the intellect univocally. This concept is common to all categories; thereby, metaphysics can have one object.[31] The problem of the unity of the object of metaphysics guided Scotus toward univocity, since in his opinion, without univocity metaphysics would not be a single science, since it would not have one object.

The second context that could be an argument for univocity was the question of our knowledge of God. To know God in a natural way, we must have the possibility of encompassing God (along with God's attributes) in a common concept of being, and that would be a univocal concept of being. That concept contains the essence of being, and essence of being is not to be determined to anything, neither the state of being finite, or infinite. Therefore, the concept can fit within it both God and the creature.[32]

The problem of univocity does not concern being that exists in itself, because for both Thomas and Scotus, being that exists in itself is analogical. The controversy concerns being as known and apprehended in a concept. Thomas thought that the concept of being was analogical because de facto, as having arisen from the way of separation and not by way of abstraction, that concept is a cluster of judgments. In the case of Scotus, we are dealing with abstraction that moves through an increasing impoverishment of contents to the end, which is pure non-contradiction and nothing more. Here, we are also dealing with an attempt to give a new status to the concept of being: the univocal concept 'being' refers to a metaphysical state that, in itself, is neither an essence

29   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 357.

30   Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 258.

31   Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentalna w metafizyce Jana Dunsa Szkota*, 23.

32   Ibid., 24.

found in a concrete thing, nor is it a concept. Such a metaphysical state of being is the counterpart to Avicenna's third nature.[33]

Although at the level of real being, Scotus speaks of analogy, that analogy does not play any special role in metaphysics, because what is most important for metaphysics is the concept of being, and not being. That concept is univocal and apart from non-contradiction does not contain any determination. In such a case, metaphysics as thus understood is more open to logic than to metaphysics, which has real being as its object. If the concept of being were only non-contradiction, then the scope of non-contradiction would delimit the field of the possible, not the real. For precisely this reason, if the further course of metaphysics developed under the influence of Scotus's views, metaphysics as the science concerning the possible would easily turn into ontology. This would happen at the price of losing real being from the field of vision. The new ontology, in turn, would be open to logic, and would be increasing closed to metaphysics. Therefore, the resolution of the question concerning our understanding of being, or more precisely, our understanding of the concept of being, whether being is univocal or analogical, demarcates the line between metaphysics in the classical sense; that is, the science that investigates reality, and ontology, which studies possible states. Although Scotus, for his own part, did not reduce the concept of being to the concept of possibility, because he related being as understood univocally to essence, which formally would be common to all beings that are different from each other; yet such an explanation did not stand the test of time, because the concept of being was associated with possible being, and this is the path that ontology took.

The Scotist definition of the univocal concept of being as what is possible provided the patronage for ontology. That definition was as follows: being is that to which existence is not opposed (*ens, hoc est cui non repugnat* esse).[34] We find precisely this definition of being in Wolff's *Ontology*.[35] Although for Scotus, such a concept of being is not merely a possibility, because it indicates an object that is ready for real existence, yet this definition of being is not a definition of real being as real. However, as soon as third nature and a third state of being were rejected, only possibility remained.

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33   Ibid., 25.

34   John Duns Scotus, *Ordinis minorum*. [*Liber IV*] (Lugduni: sumptibus Laurentii Durand, 1639), lib. IV, d. 8, q. 1; lib. IV, d. 1, q. 2, nr 2; "*dicendo istam rem esse ratam, cui non repugnat esse*" (stating this thing has to be accepted, to which existence is repugnant); ibid., [*Liber I–III*], lib. II, d. 1, q. 2); cf. Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses*, 327.

35   Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, I, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 134.

Why did Scotus not consider the analogy of proportionality as the basis for the analogical conception of being? It was because, in the structure of being, he did not recognize existence as an act that remains in a proportional relation to essence. Instead, he identified being with essence, for which existence is only a modality, and between essence and existence there is only a mental difference. At that point, the concept of being is the concept of essence; the essence is univocal not only in the order of genera, but also in the transcendental order. The concept of being contains everything that is common, and so, it excludes what is contradictory.[36] He could hold that being was analogical because each concrete thing determined by *haecceitas* differs from every other concrete thing, but he could not think that the concept of being was analogical because he reduced that concept to an essence-content, which marginalized existence.

After Scotus, at the end of the thirteenth century, univocity became the exemplary mode of predication, since other forms, including analogy, were classified as equivocity. This approach was defined by logic, not by metaphysics.[37] This approach influenced metaphysics by demanding univocity of metaphysics. When equivocity was indicated, the question of the various types of equivocity, such as strong equivocity (many different meanings), intermediate (metaphor), and weak (a change in the meaning of a term by a change of context) came to the fore, and this was inspired by Aristotle's *De sophisticis elenchis* (On Sophistical Refutations).[38] Analogy was placed in the area of intermediate equivocity. It was thus ultimately equivocity, and not analogy. However, this was determined by logic, the theory of signs, and not by metaphysics, the theory of being. Knowledge by analogy was disqualified precisely by an appeal to logic. Logic tried to isolate concepts as objects of logical operations. Such an object would have to be univocal if it were to the foundation for logical operations.[39]

Scotus's work in analogy not only influenced those who followed him and supported their master, but also influenced those who were called Thomists. In this, the author who might appear to be the link between metaphysics and

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36   "*Ens ergo vel res isto primo modo, accipitur omnino communissime, et extendit se ad quodcumque, quod non includit contradictionem*" (being or thing in the first mode is to be accepted absolutely in a most common way and extends itself to whatever does not contain a contradiction); Scotus, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, III, nr 2; cf. Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses*, 327.

37   Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 223–225.

38   Aristotle, "*On Sophistical Refutations*," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard Peter McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

39   Boulnois, *Être et représentation*, 249.

ontology, namely, Suárez, played a special role, but he did not oppose Thomas directly to support Scotus. On the contrary, many scholars even had the impression that Suárez most strongly agreed with Thomas and creatively developed the view of Thomas. Suárez was supposed to be a continuator of Thomas to a greater degree than he was a continuator of Scotus.

Suárez mentioned two types of the analogy of attribution: pure or formal, and composite or virtual.[40] While the first is a counterpart for metaphor, the second must be particularly important for metaphysics and the Aristotelian analogy of proportionality would be reduced to it. It became such because Suárez accepted the Scotist theory of being where existence is a modality of essence, and for this reason, one could not speak of a transcendental proportion of the inner components of being, since existence is not such a component. In such a situation, the analogy of attribution must take the place of the analogy of proportionality as the most important analogy. However, that analogy is different from the one that Aristotle mentioned, since each of the analogues, and not only the primary analogue, possesses the content of being. Also, knowledge of the primary analogue is not necessary in order to know the minor analogues. Finally, according to Suárez, even the analogy of proportionality is a form of metaphor, and for this reason, it could not possess the importance in metaphysics that was assigned to it.

Being as created is ordered to God according to the analogy of attribution; being qua being does not contain such ordering, because everything is contained in being. This is being under either the most abstract or the most common content. As a result, being qua being is a completely univocal concept, which is separated from everything that appears in its framework in a restricted degree as categories or genera. Therefore, faced with a choice between the certainty and clarity of univocity and the vagueness of analogy, Suárez was definitely inclined to the former.[41] For Suárez, concept of being was not only univocal, but it was indeed absolutely simple: *simplicissimus*.[42] This was a continuation of Scotus's assertion, which stated precisely that the concept of being

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40   Suárez analyzes analogy in the second disputation in his *De ratione essentiali seu conceptus entis*, entitled, "Utrum ens in quantum ens habeat in mente nostra unum conceptum formalem omnibus entibus communem?" [Does being qua being possess in our mind one formal concept common to all beings?], second section, "Utrum ens habeat unum conceptum seu rationem formalem obiectivam?" [Does being possess one concept or objective formal reason?]; Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu,* 359–370; cf. Hoeres, "Francis Suárez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis," 263–290.

41   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 361–370.

42   Hoeres, "Francis Suárez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis," 265.

is 'simply simple' (*conceptus simpliciter simplex*).[43] The unity and univocity of the concept of being were inseparable for Suárez, and so, we cannot speak of the unity of the concept of being if that concept is not essentially univocal.[44] The Spanish philosopher definitely cut himself off from the analogical conception of being that Thomas had developed.

Should we not be surprised then that not only did the concept of being as possible, but also the concept of being understood univocally, lay at the foundations of ontology, which after all had its start in Suárez's metaphysics? The creators of ontology, who started from the concept of being, indeed from the concept of possible being, had no other path except univocity, and all the different kinds of analogy had to be reducible to univocity in order to preserve the unity of the concept of being and the unity of ontology itself. The other side of the coin is that Suárez somehow freed the univocal concept of being from the concept of God, since we can speak of being without appealing to God. Later, this allowed some to make a distinction between ontology and onto-theology, since onto-theology would be typical of the views of Aristotle or Thomas. Ontology was a thoroughly modern conception, and one example would be Heidegger's ontology.

Christian Wolff was the next important figure in the history of ontology. Wolff also worked with the Scotist conception of being, because he thought that between the concept of created being and the concept of being there is a difference analogous to the difference between the finite and the infinite. He did not draw from that the same conclusions as did Scotus did, who thought that such a conception provided the foundation for univocity. On the contrary, Wolff said that here we are dealing with analogy. However, such a statement means that Wolff did not consider why Scotus introduced this difference between God and the creature, because indeed the point was to comprehend God and the creature by one concept of being that is univocal and not analogical. The undifferentiated (univocal) concept of being is first, and then in the next stage we divide that concept into finite and infinite. Meanwhile, on the basis of the univocal concept of being, Wolff introduced analogy, which was a common inconsistency, or perhaps it showed that he was not completely familiar with the philosophy of Scotus.[45] To be precise, Wolff's concept of being is univocal-analogical, since the main reference point is first univocity; that is, a concept of being common to God and the creature. Only then is the concept

43   Scotus, *Ordinis minorum*, lib. I, d. 3, q. 3; cf. Hoeres, "Francis Suárez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis," 274.

44   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 273.

45   Ibid., 370–371.

of being divided into finite and infinite, and at that stage the analogies be-
tween finite and infinite being are recognized with respect to questions such
as alternatives or *modi*.[46]

Franz Brentano was the next figure to play an important role in the recep-
tion of the ancient and medieval philosophical legacy, and he is already in re-
cent times. The recent ontology of authors such as Meinong and Husserl was
revived through Brentano. Brentano not only stood by the Scotist conception
of being, but he also was critical of the analogy of being. In his early work on
the categories in Aristotle, Brentano had said that although we speak of be-
ing in many ways (*to on légetai pollachós*), being should still be understood
univocally. He criticized Aristotle for not recognizing predicates such as qual-
ity, position, time, and shape as substantial determinations. Brentano thought
that they were aspects of substance. In that case, being must be understood as
substance.[47] The concept of being is the same for substance and for accidents,
and even for accidents of accidents.[48] This is because it is the highest concept.
The categories are not different modes (or meanings) of the understanding
of being but rather they are the highest modes of the differentiation of being.
However, according to Brentano, they do not exhaust all the differentiations
of substance, because there are more supreme genera that determine a sub-
ject accidentally than those that Aristotle presented.[49] Brentano also modified
the Aristotelian conception of being and the conception of the categories. For
Brentano, the categories were determinations of substance, and they were not
a mode of being different from substance (although in subordination to sub-
stance) as Aristotle thought. In turn, for Aristotle, the concept of being was
not something 'above' the categories, but being was either substance or one of
the categories. Meanwhile, Brentano regarded being as the supreme concept,
which suggests that Brentano belonged to the Scotist tradition.

In the concept of being, there is no difference between essence and exis-
tence, whether a real or a mental difference, and there is no hierarchy of being;
there is only either being or nothingness. Only concrete things are real, and

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46   Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, II, Sec. 2, cap. 3, para. 841, 846–848.

47   Franz Brentano, *The Theory of Categories*, trans. Roderick M. Chisholm and Norbert
      Guterman (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 92; cf. Franco Volpi, *Heidegger e Brentano.
      L'aristotelismo e il problema dell'univocità dell'essere nella formazione filosofica del giovane
      Martin Heidegger* [Heidegger and Brentano. Aristotelism and the Problem of Univocity
      of Being in the Philosophical Formation of the Young Heidegger] (Padova: CEDAM, 1976),
      14–15.

48   Brentano, *The Theory of Categories*, 99.

49   Ibid., 99–100.

everything else is a fiction. The concept of being covers everything including God, and it is univocal.[50]

The three philosophers who most definitely influenced the separation of ontology from metaphysics—Suárez, Wolff, and Brentano—supported the univocal conception of being. The source of this separation was essentialism, which either ignored or marginalized existence, and then the final ground-work of being appeared as the broadest concept, which was univocal and was most often apprehended by simple act of the intellect (although it could have been developed by abstraction). That concept contained everything that could be called being, including God and whatever is non-contradictory. All this was connected by the concept of being in a univocal way.

However, the separation of the concept of being from really existing being brought further changes. God was eliminated from this concept, and as a re-sult, the concept of being was expanded with the concept of that which was a product of thought, and so, it was expanded by the impossible and the contra-dictory. In this way, precisely on account of the ontological conception of be-ing, philosophical reflection entered a post-metaphysical phase, predicated on the belief that traditional metaphysics had been 'overcome.' Meanwhile, it was not metaphysics that had been defeated, but on account of the influence of the Avicennian-Scotist current, it had become ontologized. This influence came through Suárez, then Wolff, and for recent ontology, Brentano played a major role. Brentano was treated as the authority in the question of how the ancient and scholastic conception of being should be understood. Meanwhile, Scotism was dominant in all those cases, and the most striking feature of Scotism was univocity. Here, was the major reason for the crisis in metaphysics—a crisis that could not be overcome in a desire to salvage metaphysics, unless there was a return to reflection on the controversy over whether the concept of being is univocal or analogical.

The attempt to bury metaphysics as such, to 'free' metaphysics from phi-losophy was based on the logical fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* (irrelevant conclu-sion), because there is no metaphysics as such, but only various currents of metaphysics. The metaphysics that looks to the existential conception of being was not buried by ontology in modern times, because that current of meta-physics was misinterpreted, and metaphysics as such cannot be buried today merely because the Scotist current of metaphysics is regarded as metaphysics. Without a clear determination of what the point of metaphysics is, it is also not possible to restore metaphysics to its key role in philosophy, nor is it pos-sible to refute criticism directed against metaphysics. Meanwhile, just as Plato

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50   Krąpiec, *Teoria analogii bytu*, 384–386.

and Aristotle were divided by their beliefs on the status of form, whether form is a transcendent principle located beyond being (Plato) or an immanent principle that determines the concrete thing from within (Aristotle), so Thomas and Scotus were divided by their views on the status of existence in being, whether existence is an act different from essence (Thomas), or only a modality of essence (Scotus). As a consequence of that last difference, a different approach to univocity and analogy took shape. When there was a movement toward univocity, the result was the rise of ontology with its many varieties, which somehow "appropriated" the entire terrain called metaphysics. Meanwhile, ontology based on essence and equivocity is not the whole of metaphysics, because there is still the metaphysics that appeals to the act of existence and to analogy, which permeates being and concept of being in a transcendental dimension. That metaphysics remains metaphysics, while the metaphysics that starts from univocity becomes ontology and is then transformed into logic, or even into a philosophical science whose object is contradiction, and which has within itself no room for God.

To summarize, if we consider the various tracks upon which metaphysical inquiries ran, the solution to the question whether the concept of being is to be understood univocally or analogically seems to be crucial and most authoritative. Univocity, even with the analogy of being as such, must lead to ontology; thereby, the contact with really existing reality is broken, and there is no longer any room for metaphysics. The result of the absence of analogy at the level of our knowledge of being qua being is that, since being is analogical, our knowledge is not knowledge of being qua being, but it is knowledge of some concept of being, and then in the long run, it is the creation of a concept of being, which, if separated from reality, is easily changed into an object, and even into contradiction. However, that is no longer metaphysics.

Metaphysics, Ontology, Onto-Theology?

The confusion surrounding the appelations used to indicate 'metaphysics' since the times of Aristotle took a new form in the twentieth century. The question was no longer how first philosophy, theology, and ontology were related to one another, but how ontology and theology were related to one another. It was thought that ontology had overcome metaphysics. Metaphysics as a name was somewhat torn in its reference: etymologically, it indicated God (as the science about what is beyond the physical), but historically, it referred to being qua being. There was no longer any doubt that ontology was the science of being qua being, because the term was created with this in mind.

As soon as ontology was recognized as the leading name, a dilemma arose. Does the term 'ontology' include all being from possible being to God, or is God not expressed here, and then ontology is simply the science of being, which does not resolve anything concerning God? We find this sort of ontology in Heidegger; it is an ontology without God. Given Heidegger's enormous influence, the conception of ontology that was neutral to the existence or non-existence of God started to become ubiquitous. This, in turn, entailed the verification of how metaphysics was regarded in its historical dimension. This is because as the term ontology was taken at face value, one more neologism was introduced: 'onto-theology.' Onto-theology concerns both being qua being, and being as God. Such an onto-theology was discovered in Aristotle, since Aristotle's metaphysics was neither the science concerning being qua being (with the exclusion of God), nor was it the science concerning God alone, because it also concerned being qua being. If it were a science concerning being qua being, and concerning God, then it could be called onto-theology.

This procedure seems completely sensible and logical, but it has one serious failing: it upsets the original conception of the most important domain of philosophy with its question marks and imposes a new name burdened with many philosophical assumptions; that new name springs from a current of philosophy other than Aristotle's. If Aristotle's metaphysics is the science of being qua being, then ontology is the science of the concept of being. If metaphysics is directed to real being as real, then for ontology, possible being is real being. Finally, if metaphysics from different angles tends toward God as the being par excellence, and as the cause of all other beings, then for ontology, the concept of being as the broadest concept is most important, and the principle of causality is neutralized. In this context, it seems completely

out of place to call Aristotle's metaphysics 'onto-theology,' because this puts the metaphysical problematic in an ontological perspective. The Aristotelian conception of being qua being is not the same as being qua being in ontology.

Only a purely verbal approach to this formulation could give the impression that the being qua being of metaphysics and of ontology are the same. They are not the same, and so, to save the specific character of metaphysical knowledge as metaphysical and not ontology, metaphysics cannot be identified with ontology or with onto-theology.

There is one more error that can be made if Heidegger's position is treated as a metaphysical and theological oracle, namely, "after Heidegger it is difficult to think of God as before, as if nothing had happened."[1] The expression 'before' clearly shows the significant imprecision of this way of thinking. What does before mean? It is not enough to think of it as 'before Heidegger,' because before Heidegger, there were two and half millennia of philosophical reflection on being and on God; that reflection had much variety, Heidegger knew only a few lines of thought, and in addition, those he knew he interpreted in his own peculiar way. Why should Heidegger's position be treated as all-encompassing? Again, what should be said of postmodernists such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion who followed in his footsteps and accepted at face value Heidegger's verdict on the end of metaphysics after the deconstruction of metaphysics? The word 'deconstruction' gives an impression of intellectual refinement. Like the Latin word, it arouses respect. Heidegger used a German word and spoke simply of 'demolition' (*Aufbau*). The question remains open, which metaphysics did he demolish and which metaphysics did he leave untouched. He certainly did not demolish the metaphysics of Thomas, which he did not know very well at all; at most it must have been some variation of the metaphysics of Scotus in its academic version, mainly perpetuated among Protestant thinkers, for example, the first philosophy of Wolff.

This took place when Heidegger used expressions such as 'the end of metaphysical philosophy,' 'overcoming metaphysics,' 'deconstruction of [metaphysics'] history.'[2] The question is still open. Which metaphysics and which history did he mean? There was not a single metaphysics, and the history of metaphysics would help us see moments when everything collapsed, when something essential was lost, when there were changes in direction, and when the formal

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1 Zdzisław Kunicki, *Teo-ontologia wobec onto-teologii. Étienne Gilsona metafizyka "Księgi Wyjścia" na tle współczesnych sporów teistycznych* [Theo-Ontology Facing Onto-Theology: Étienne Gilson's Metaphysics of the 'Book of Exodus' upon the Background of Contemporary Theistic Controversies] (Olsztyn : Studio Poligrafii Komputerowej "SQL," 2004), 5.

2 Ibid., 101.

object changed. Metaphysics cannot be treated as a uniform continuum in its history. It cannot be demolished in the hopes of creating something utterly new.[3]

It is not our intention to require of Heidegger a 'factographic historical knowledge.'[4] Such knowledge is unattainable, and even superfluous. However, when we are at a certain level of generality and this seems to be the case when we hear of the deconstruction of metaphysics, then the question of what sort of metaphysics concerns us, how it is understood, and by whom it is represented, is not a question concerning knowledge of facts. That would be the case if we were asking about the hour, day, or year when Thomas became aware of the role of existence in being. That is not the sort of question that concerns us, but we must ask to what degree Heidegger knew the difference between the philosophy of Thomas and the philosophy of Scotus. We can and must ask about this.

Why does the pejorative description of Aristotle's philosophy as burdened by onto-theology appear a priori, as it were? Perhaps onto-theology is also a burden, but the problem here is that Aristotle's philosophy was not onto-theology, but first philosophy, in which God does not appear a priori, but as the cause. Perhaps we would reject the cause from the field of the metaphysical

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3   We find similar imprecise formulations in the description of postmodernism: "The thing that sets postmodernism apart in philosophy is its critical relation to the traditional philosophy of the west"; M. Żardecka, "Postmodernizm," In Gawor and Stachowski, *Filozofia współczesna*, 359. When we investigate what this criticized tradition is, it turns out that it is, "suspicion toward reason and all great truths, serious theories, and lofty rational justifications" (ibid., 361). The suspicion toward reason removes itself, since it is an effect of that reason. The suspicion toward all great truths is itself a great truth, because it has a universal dimension and claims to be truth and not falsehood. The suspicion toward lofty rational justifications has an artistic dimension, and not a philosophical dimension, because loftiness or pomposity is not a theoretical category, but an aesthetic category. We read further, "postmodernism rejects faith in cognitive objectivity" (ibid.). What does faith have in common with classical philosophy when one is speaking of the natural knowledge of reality? Faith presupposes a lack of direct cognitive contact with what is known, and such an approach is not part of classical philosophy. In turn, the concept of cognitive objectivity, especially upon the background of analyses concerning intentionality, is mixed here with the concept of cognitive realism. When it is a question of faith in the 'possibility of reaching universal absolute truth,' then, leaving aside that the word 'faith' has no place here, there is also no place for the concept of absolute truth, because what would that really mean? Truth is the agreement of knowledge with the way things are, and if reality is pluralistic, then there is no single absolute truth, because there are many truths about various things. The one truth can only be analogical.

4   Kunicki, *Teo-ontologia wobec onto-teologii*, 102.

interpretation of being, but in the name of what, and on the basis of what science would we do this?

If in Heidegger's eyes, Aristotle was more Greek than Plato (according to the opinion of Rémi Brague), then how faithful to Aristotle's writing is a statement such as the following: "The proper object of first philosophy was no longer nature, arché, or the idea, but the concept of being qua being"?[5] Yet in none of Aristotle's work does he say that the object is the concept of being qua being, because that is a medieval conception along the Avicennian-Scotist line. Aristotle said that this science concerned being qua being (*estin epistéme tis he theореí to on he on*).[6] Being qua being and the concept of being qua being are not the same. The concept of being qua being is situated at the level of the mode of human knowledge (human beings possess concepts), and being qua being is situated in an order outside of humanity (being not as what is known, but as reality).

When Heidegger says, "[metaphysics] names it be[ing] but means be-ing as be-ing" and so, "from beginning to end, the statements of metaphysics move in a strange sort of way in a general mix-up about be-ing and be[ing],"[7] obviously, such a statement makes sense in a completely post-Scotist conception of being, which is what Heidegger was dealing with; but by cutting itself off from God, it must find its support in the subject—*Dasein*. In turn, the result of the univocal understanding of this act of being is that nothingness must be given value, since "this no-thing comes to pass as be[ing]"[8] It was given more value because, as in Hegel's case, the univocal concept of being did not allow an explanation of the dynamism of being; so here, the separation from God did not allow one to find the sources in being for the act of being. Hence, only nothingness remains. At that point, this nothingness is connected not with God's creative power (*creatio ex nihilo*) but with a certain state in which *Dasien* may be found; that is, humanity itself; and it is a state of terror, which replaces astonishment.[9] Astonishment or wonder was the source of philosophy according to Aristotle, while terror as an emotion referred simply to a danger in the face of which one had to take a practical (moral) attitude. That attitude was the ability to master the emotions, then to recognize the scale of the danger

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5   Ibid., 103.

6   Aritot., *Met.* IV, 1.

7   Heidegger, Introduction to "What Is Metaphysics?"

8   Heidegger, *Postscript to What is Metaphysics,* transl. transl. Miles Groth, http://wagner.wpen gine.netdna-cdn.com/psychology/files/2013/01/Heidegger-What-Is-Metaphysics-Transla tion-GROTH.pdf.

9   Kunicki, *Teo-ontologia wobec onto-teologii* [Theo-ontology facing onto-theology], 104.

and determine the means of defense; and this, in turn, was the work of prudence. By connecting the sources of philosophy, especially of metaphysics, with terror, philosophy was shifted from the theoretical order to the practical order. This was typical of Protestant existentialism (Kierkegaard), of which Heidegger was a continuator. It was not metaphysics in the classical sense as theoretical knowledge of being qua being.

Despite the many enigmas and misunderstandings connected with the word 'metaphysics,' this word should not be abandoned for the sake of more recent neologisms such as 'ontology' or 'onto-theology.' The word 'metaphysics' appeared to mean the fourteen books written by Aristotle, and for centuries, indeed millennia, commentaries were written on those books as commentaries on metaphysics. We should resist the attempt to redirect those philosophical interests to the peculiar current called ontology, with all its philosophical but rather hidden assumptions, which we have tried in this book to lay bare, even if the redirection of we speak is hard to accept. Let metaphysics remain metaphysics, even with its elliptical statements, its difficulties (*aporias*), and controversies: a metaphysics that is always directed toward being. Let ontology remain ontology, with its system of concepts and clear and distinct ideas, though they are distant from reality. Metaphysics in its classical conception is neither ontology nor onto-theology. It is and remains metaphysics; that is, the science concerning being qua being.

Summary of Part 3

In almost every important aspect, the differences between metaphysics and ontology are crucial. Metaphysics has as its object being qua being; ontology, the concept of being. Metaphysics is occupied chiefly with real beings; ontology, with possible being. In metaphysics, existence is the act of being; in ontology, it is a mode of essence. In metaphysics, essence is a part of being, in ontology, it is being in itself. The object of metaphysics is always reality; in ontology, it can be even unreality. In metaphysics, being is being; in ontology, being can be replaced by the object. In metaphysics, intentionality has its roots in the cognition of the real being, in ontology, it is based upon consciousness, independent from reality. In metaphysics, the category of a subject had a secondary meaning in relation to substance, while in ontology, subject started to be substituted for substance and was supposed even to create an object of cognition. In metaphysics, the category of a system did not have epistemic value in itself over the truth, while in ontology, system was substituted for truth. In metaphysics, being and the structure of transcendental properties of being have an analogical meaning; in ontology, there is a strong tendency towards univocity. Thus, it seems justified to emphasize the essential differences between metaphysics and ontology.

Conclusion

Metaphysics or ontology? The search for an answer to this question, so crucial for Western philosophy, became an opportunity to study how the object of metaphysics has been defined in various currents of philosophy. As a result, this object has been described in so many different ways that the term 'metaphysics,' in some cases, became inadequate. To summarize, however, everything was debatable. The debates concerned how being qua being should be understood, how an object as an object should be understood, and concepts such as the concept of being. Despite this, we can find commonalities that allow us to distinguish between one current of metaphysics and another, and between metaphysics and ontology.

In ancient times and in the Middle Ages, the problem was not formulated specifically as the difference between metaphysics and ontology. That was not possible during the first half-century BCE, because those terms did not yet exist. While the term 'metaphysics' appeared in the first century BCE, the term 'ontology' was not coined until the early seventeenth century. Even when both terms were in use, they were mostly used interchangeably or as complementary terms, not in opposition. In the twentieth century, for the first time, controversies over philosophy began to be formulated with clear and firm reference to these terms as expressing different approaches to the object of philosophy; some pointed to ontology as the most important domain of philosophy; and some condemned metaphysics to a minor position, or to destruction and oblivion.

The controversy almost subsided, but this was because by various methods metaphysics had been sentenced to oblivion, or if some still remembered it, it was in a very negative light. Is it not strange that this sort of metaphysics disappeared from the curricula of most universities, including Catholic universities and seminaries? This happened even though Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, so strongly emphasized the importance of metaphysics for Christian culture, including theology. However, this was not out of a desire to promote fundamentalist philosophy, but because of the belief that theology must look to philosophy in order to interpret the data of Revelation in accordance with the truth. What benefit would there be in a philosophy that was closed to reality? How can a theologian appreciate the value of a philosophy that he uses in an unconscious way?[1] The fact is that the kind of philosophy that is taught, whether metaphysics is part of the curriculum or has been replaced

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1 John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter, Fides et Ratio*, 77.

by ontology, and whether one or another line of philosophy is promoted, depends on predilections of particular lecturers or on administrative regulations. The kind of philosophy that is promoted may be determined sometimes by a milieu that is concentrated in some particular department, and sometimes by instructions from the outside. It may be determined from outside, when, in the standardization of a curriculum, a particular nomenclature is imposed, and that, in turn, sets the direction for how the topic is treated. This happens in connection with metaphysics, when the term 'metaphysics' is used in connection with the term 'ontology,' or when it is simply replaced by ontology.

In the course of our analyses, it has turned out that the modern and contemporary controversy over metaphysics has a second, lower floor. On the one hand, the scope of philosophical knowledge came into play here, including metaphysical knowledge of recognized authors, especially in textbooks on the history of philosophy. On the other hand, the paths by which an image of the philosophy of the past, mainly ancient and medieval philosophy, have been transmitted, came into play. If we speak of modern and contemporary philosophy, a peculiar dislike for the past is dominant, especially for the Middle Ages. This aversion, rooted in the times of the Reformation (when the expressions such as 'the Dark Ages,' 'medieval philosophy as the handmaid of theology' were launched), was adopted by new dominant trends, which were more ideological than religious. These include the ideologies of the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the many protests during 1968 (all of which were varieties of socialism). To discredit Christianity, they discredited philosophy as it was classically understood in order to open the way to the negation of rational and realistic philosophy by promoting postmodernism.

In what context, and through whom, did the image of ancient and medieval philosophy take shape among the luminaries of modern and contemporary philosophy? As it turns out, there was not at all a complete break from the past to begin everything anew. Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger did not make a complete break from the past. Each of those philosophers had a teacher who was his bridge to the past, especially to Greek and medieval philosophy, but in each case the teacher pointed to one of many currents. Suárez was the mediator for modern philosophy. His *Metaphysical Disputations* was the number one work in classical gymnasia and universities, both Catholic and Protestant. Through Suárez, modern philosophers learned of the views of the most important philosophers of the past. The next author who was a strong influence, although his reach was not so extensive, was Wolff. Through him, an image formed of 'scholastic philosophy' as a kind of philosophy that must be criticized and rejected. Kant took up that task. Although Wolff was not as popular as Suárez, through Kant, he communicated a distorted image

of scholasticism. The next figure, who was a master for many philosophers and regarded as the most important figures for twentieth-century philosophy, was Brentano. Brentano brought back certain ideas of ancient and medieval philosophy, and these inspired the development of new philosophical movements and systems, in particular phenomenology.

What linked Suárez, Wolff, and Brentano was their similar way of looking at scholasticism. They saw scholasticism through the lens of the philosophy of Scotus. Through Suárez, Wolff, and Brentano, Scotism influenced many thinkers up to recent times, although the authors of contemporary philosophy rarely consider this. They do not know about that which is called scholasticism, but rather a particular variety of scholasticism, and this is so even when they speak of Thomism. It is a curious situation. Modern and contemporary philosophers, despite their deliberate attempt to break away from the past, and especially from scholasticism, are still stuck in it, except they are stuck in that current of scholasticism that Scotus represented and helped to create.

The controversy over metaphysics and ontology is not on the level of names, but concerns the meaning of those names. The controversy is in the context of various philosophical movements. In the ancient world, there was the controversy between Plato and Aristotle. In the Middle Ages, there was the controversy between Thomas and Scotus, and in recent times, from a historical point of view, between realistic philosophy as represented by Gilson and from a systemic point of view against different ontologies and even ideologies, by the Lublin School of Philosophy formed by Krąpiec.

What will be the future course of the controversy? It will be determined by openness to a deeper knowledge of ancient and medieval philosophy in their theoretical dimension; that is, not in the practical, technical, or even theological dimension. Next, the controversy will be decided by an increase in knowledge, not only with respect to novelty and originality, but also with respect to the dependence and continuity or regress of successors in relation to their predecessors. The Hegelian version of the historiosophy of philosophy, according to which what is past is almost automatically assimilated and overcome by what comes later, has had the result that thorough research on the influence of earlier movements upon later ones, and how they have been deformed or become unknown, has been neglected. The career of Bacon, who studied philosophy as a teenager for two years, with one year's interruption because of illness, and who is thought to have effectively undermined philosophy of Aristotle, is one of those philosophical myths that let people create geniuses where there are none.

Nothing happens automatically in the development of philosophy. Philosophy can regress to the point of death. What is postmodernism if not the death

of philosophy? It is, but as an ideology, not as a philosophy. The ideology artificially propagated under the auspices of political correctness in the media and in universities is incapable of dialogue, because it rejects the possibility that we can have rational knowledge of reality. Yet reality is the common reference point for those who seek truth. Without reality, dialogue changes into a repetitive monologue that loses any cognitive function.

How can classical philosophy and metaphysics be defended? This can be done, as it often has been for centuries, by studying, discussing, writing, and giving lectures. The Hegelian spirit of time cannot spoil anything here if we consciously and seriously consider the role of philosophy in Western culture and resist the pressures of fashion and merely administrative directives. This philosophy will be alive if even one philosopher makes the effort to engage in metaphysics.

This is not a trivial matter. The controversy over the place of metaphysics in the philosophical culture of the West is enormously important if it is question of forming a picture of the reality we know, and in the context of what is knowable only in part; that is, what belongs to transcendence, what in religion is called God. It is important for creating a milieu for human development; a society belongs to a culture that is shared by many because the same principles and ends are recognized by them all. Metaphysics reveals such principles and ends as it ensures that those principles are not separated from reality.

Only metaphysics as it is classically understood investigates reality precisely as reality. The particular sciences do not do this; instead, they investigate reality only with respect to a selected aspect of content. Ontology does not do this; it investigates only concepts and possible states. Only metaphysics does this, and therefore, it is an irreplaceable treasure in Western culture.

In our work, we were not aiming at a postulated or dogmatic resolution of the rivalry between metaphysics and ontology. We wanted to show the philosophical context in which the controversy occurred, a controversy upon which the disputants sometimes reflected more, and sometimes less. The author holds to the hope that by this book, certain disputed points will now be better illuminated, and this will allow those who support one or another answer to make a deeper evaluation. If this happens, this would be very much welcomed, because it is certain that the controversy will continue.

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Index of Names

Index of Subjects

truth (cont.)
intentional propositions and349
objective thought and325, 326
in philosophical texts
about reality54
Revelation and2
theoretical knowledge of147
t-oriented knowledge54
value of121, 123

unity (singularity)182, 268, 306, 309, 367,
371, 398, 410, and passim
composite214, 266
of the cosmos44
of essence278
of the mind348
negation of a173
plurality and56, 272, 273
of reality221
of science380, 396
of the Trinity345
univocity (equivocity)179, 221, 397, 398, 402,
404, 405–13, 415–20, 426
analogy and178
Scotus72
universality32, 268, 276, 278, 279, 379

value370
cognitive88
hypothetical161

metaphysical105
philosophical119, 277
universal322
without roots (transcendentals)367
variety406, 407, 409

way up and down44
'what is it?' questions224, 238, 239, 263,
264, 305
will125, 350, 361
divine228
first principle of movement to an
end344
freedom of379
God's act of199, 227, 345
object of317
wisdom7, 12–4, 19–21, 26, 27, 29, 33, 34, 55,
58, 142, 393
derivation of term 'philosophy,'11
end in itself18
of God143
occult388
Plato16
Socrates15
wonder as source of philosophy138, 225,
381, 382, 424